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DAUGHTERS OF CHINA: AN EXAMINATION OF THE HOME, SCHOOL, AND  
COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENT AND  
YOUNG ADULT CHINESE ADOPTEES

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A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership

in the

Department of Education and Educational Psychology

at

Western Connecticut State University

2012

DAUGHTERS OF CHINA: AN EXAMINATION OF THE HOME, SCHOOL, AND  
COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENT AND  
YOUNG ADULT CHINESE ADOPTEES

Marguerite Scaglione Aldrich, MS, NCC, EdD

Western Connecticut State University

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of adolescent and young adult Chinese adoptees raised in the United States. It sought to describe how the adoptees perceived their life experiences in different contexts of their lives and over time. To date, there has been very little research conducted with Chinese adoptees. The studies that had been conducted with this population have predominantly relied upon the parents' perspectives; simply because most of the children had not been old enough to speak for themselves. As a result, the voices of these young women were missing from previous research.

The intent of this research was, therefore, to give this oldest group of Chinese adoptees a voice by harvesting their personal perceptions in order to describe and illuminate the essence of their lived experiences. The focus was the development of identity, the experiences of academic life, and the quality of family, peer, and community relationships.

Using a multiple case study design, data were gathered from a sample of 11 cases. Each case consisted of three participants—one female Chinese adoptee, one parent, and one educator who worked with the adoptee. The maximum variation sample of volunteers was

recruited through networking methods and snowball sampling. The perspectives of parents and educators were included to enhance the credibility and consistency of the findings through triangulation of sources.

Each adoptee completed a demographic survey, semi-structured interview, and a self-concept inventory, which was a self-reporting instrument. Parents and educators also completed demographic surveys and participated in personal semi-structured interviews.

Data from the 33 interview transcripts were qualitatively coded and analyzed for commonly recurring themes and comparisons both within and across cases. Results from the self-concept scale were used as additional data to support and verify the qualitative data obtained from the interviews and questionnaires. The analyses yielded nine overarching themes: good fortune and specialness, family bonding and appreciation, self-confidence, strong work ethic, Asian stereotypes, resilience, a sense of belonging, an interest in a variety of cultures, and a fluctuating appreciation of origins.

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2012

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APPROVAL PAGE



*School of Professional Studies  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership*

Doctor of Education Dissertation

DAUGHTERS OF CHINA: AN EXAMINATION OF THE HOME, SCHOOL, AND  
COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENT AND  
YOUNG ADULT CHINESE ADOPTEES

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the time, attention, assistance, and caring of numerous individuals. First to my primary advisor, Dr. Deborah Hardy: Deb, your words of encouragement, unending patience, and belief in this project were critical to its success. As any great counselor would do, you supported me when I needed it, pushed me when I could handle it, and believed in me when you knew I could do it.

Second, to my committee members Dr. Marcia A. B. Delcourt and Dr. George Kain: Marcy, your knowledge and passion for research were an inspiration to me since beginning this program. Thank you for supporting this project. George, my longtime friend and colleague, your willingness to serve on my committee and your presence as a fellow adoptive parent have been vital to me during this process. May this work bless you and give you hope.

Additional thanks go to Dr. Lorraine Kolbusz, Dr. Christine Salon, and Dr. Amy Reynolds for volunteering your time to assist with the reading, writing, and auditing of the research.

To the 11 adoptee participants of this study, thank you for opening your lives to me for the purposes of this research. I am forever indebted to each of you for your willingness to share your life experiences. To each of the parent participants, thank you for taking the time to support this research and for trusting me with your beautiful children. You were each an inspiration to me as a parent. And, to the educator participants, thank you for the precious time you provided to interview with me on behalf of the adoptees. As a fellow educator, I am keenly aware of how many demands there are on your time. Many of you interviewed

with me from home during the evening or weekend hours—you are to be honored for your dedication to the teaching profession and your students.

Finally, I must thank my family and special friends. To my parents for going above and beyond the call of “grandparenthood” by providing meals for my family while I was working, a safe place for my children to go after school, and the belief in me that I could achieve this goal. Thank you for instilling in me the conviction that love does not come in colors. You both taught me to be accepting of everyone regardless of background, intelligence, or beliefs. A special thanks to my nephew, Xavier, for salvaging my computer in times of distress. To my two special friends, Mary and Kathleen, who were nothing less than surrogate parents to my children during these past five and half years. To Mary: thank you for being my study partner and babysitter extraordinaire. I could not have made it through the coursework without your cheerleading and moral support. To Kathleen: I cannot express enough how grateful I am to have you in my life, and how fortunate my children are to have you as their “second mommy”. You provided moral support, humor, food, a safe haven for my children, and a quiet place to work. Finally, to my husband, Geoff, for putting up with me during this very long project—I know it wasn’t easy for you, and there were times it was a tremendous struggle and burden on you. Thank you for putting up with it anyway, even if you couldn’t comprehend why I was doing this.

At the commencement of this project, I thought I could achieve anything I put my mind to if I persevered and worked hard enough. What I have discovered, instead, is that I cannot achieve anything alone; without the assistance, love, and encouragement of others. None of the following pages would have ever been written if it weren’t for all of the individuals mentioned above, and countless others who I have likely failed to mention here.



## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work and all that I do to my daughters, Vivian and Olivia. You are my inspiration and greatest joy. Thank you for the many days and hours you had to spend without mommy around. I intend to make up for those times going forward. I only hope this work will benefit you and other Chinese adoptees. It is to you and all of them that I dedicate this work.

My hope for all adoptees is the knowledge in the deepest part of your hearts that you each have a story that is special and worthy of being told.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Adoption has existed in one form or another throughout recorded history, even as far back as biblical time beginning with Moses (Brodzinsky, Smith, & Brodzinsky, 1998; Javier, Baden, Biafora, Camacho-Gingerich, & Henderson, 2007; Pertman, 2000). Informal kinship adoptions have probably occurred since the beginning of time, with relatives stepping in to parent a child who has been orphaned by some unfortunate event.

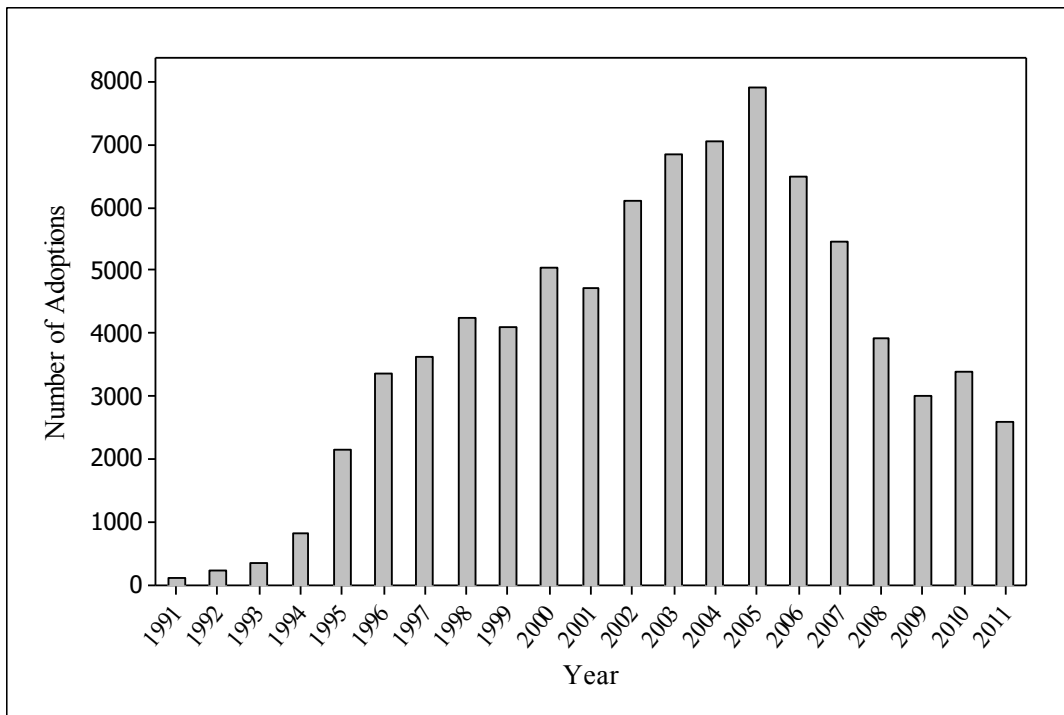
In the United States, creating or expanding a family through adoption has become a more popular option than in the past. Increased media attention has resulted in widespread acceptance of adoption as a way to form a family (Pertman, 2000). A National Adoption Attitudes Survey in 2001 found that 39% of American adults had considered adopting a child, 68% had a very favorable opinion about adoption, and 65% had experience with adoption either through their own family or that of a close friend (Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption & Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2002).

Not only has adoption become more socially acceptable in the United States but the forms of adoption have become more diverse (Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990). “As adoption practice and policy have changed, along with social mores, the demographics of who adopts, who is adopted, and who places a child for adoption have also changed” (Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler, & Esau, 2000, p. 380). Within the past 30 years there has been a major shift in the types of families formed by adoption. There are increasing numbers of single persons, gay/lesbian individuals, and older adults seeking to adopt; as well as people wanting to adopt children from within the foster care system (Zamostny, O’Brien, Baden, & Wiley, 2003). The predominance of older adults looking to become parents has resulted in increased infertility, which has paved the way for more willingness to agree to open adoption

arrangements with birthparents, to adopt children who are born in other countries and of a different race, and to adopt children with special needs (Brodzinsky et al., 1998; Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2005; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Silverman & Feigelman, 1990). Adam Pertman, the Executive Director of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute and Associate Editor of *Adoption Quarterly*, describes adoption in America as undergoing a “metamorphosis” and as “nothing less than a revolution” (2000, p. 4 ). With adoption practices changing so drastically and so rapidly, continued research in this field is vital.

While adoption has become more widespread in the United States, the number of children available for adoption domestically has decreased. This decrease has been explained by several factors, including the increase in availability of birth control methods, the legalization of abortion, the acceptance of single parenthood, and the trend of couples marrying later and starting families when they are older, leading to increased infertility rates. As a result, many have looked to other options for starting a family. One of those options is international adoption (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Simon & Alstein, 2002).

Over the last two decades, as a result of the changes occurring in China and the U.S., China has become a dominant source of intercountry adoptions (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). The United States Department of State reports over 250,000 intercountry adoptions of children from foreign nations since 1998, with 25% coming from China (2011). Figure 1 illustrates the trend in Chinese adoptions to the United States over the past two decades. In 1991, there were 115 adoptions from China; by 1995 that number increased to over 2,000. As of 2009, there have been approximately 74,000 Chinese children, predominantly girls, adopted in the United States (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2011; U.S. Department of State, 2011). This represents the largest single group of intercountry adoptees who are



*Figure 1.* Chinese adoptees brought to the United States by year, 1991 through 2011.

Adapted from the websites of The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute and U.S.

Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2012.

presently under 18 years of age. A child adopted at 12 months of age in 1995, when the number of Chinese adoptions began to increase, would be about 17 years old now. The first of these children are approaching or already in young adulthood.

This qualitative study attempted to describe the essence of the experience of being a Chinese adoptee (hereinafter referred to as CA) in the United States. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, self-concept surveys, demographic surveys, and follow-up interviews. The study was a multiple case study design, which is defined as involving two or more participants in order to provide a detailed examination of a particular event (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

## **Rationale**

Despite the changes in adoption practices over the past few decades, the research in this field has been quite limited. Much of the early research prior to 1990 focused on the psychological, social/emotional, and academic problems of adoptees from clinical populations (Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990).

Adoptees have been considered a population at-risk because they are overrepresented in residential and inpatient psychiatric institutions at a rate of 10-15%, and in outpatient mental health programs at a rate of 5%. These rates are of concern considering only 2% of children are reportedly adopted in the U.S. (Miller, Fan, Christensen, Grotevant, & van Dulmen, 2000; Zamostny et al., 2003). Similarly, there is also an indication of an overrepresentation of adoptees among special education populations in schools (Brodzinsky, 1987; Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990; Simmel, Brooks, Barth, & Hinshaw, 2001). The results of many of these “pathology-oriented” studies, as defined by Brodzinsky, have been challenged and explained by methodological limitations. In spite of this, it is still a motive for educators to become more aware of the individual needs of this special population of students.

Brodzinsky states, “We need much more research on the beneficial effects of adoption for children whose early life experiences place them at “high risk” for neurological, developmental, and psychological problems” (Brodzinsky et al., 1998, p. 114-115). There has been a call in the field for a shift in the focus of research from one of pathology to one of resilience (Zamostny et al., 2003). If factors responsible for positive experiences can be determined, this information can be used by prospective adoptive parents, educators,

professionals, and agency members, both here and abroad, to improve the practice of adoption.

The limited research that exists on CAs, as a subgroup of adoptees, suggests that they have fared quite well emotionally, socially, and academically (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2011; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tan, 2006). There is evidence that they have bonded well with family members in their adoptive homes and are successful in school (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tong, 2005). However, most of these outcomes have been ascertained through research studies done with the adoptive parents or CAs prior to adolescence. Do the CAs' perceptions agree with these findings? Has this particular subgroup of adoptees continued to adapt well through adolescence, a tumultuous time for many children? What advice do young adult CAs have to offer to expand upon the body of knowledge in this field?

### **Statement of the Problem**

Adolescence is a difficult time of development. This period can be further complicated by issues of adoption and the separation from not just one, but two sets of parents (North American Council on Adoptable Children, 2011). As all adolescents must do, adoptees have to deal with the task of separating from the parents that raised them. However, adoptees might also begin to face issues of separating from their birth origins and birthfamily. Grotevant (1997) posits that the process of adolescent identity development is more difficult for adoptees than for non-adoptees, especially for those who are racially different from their families.

This study involved a sample of female adolescent and young adult CAs, ranging in age from 16 to 20 years. The focus was the development of identity, the experiences of



academic life, and the quality of family, peer, social, and community relationships. The intent of the study was to give this oldest group of adoptees a voice to harvest personal perceptions that had not been previously available. The perspective of the adolescents and young adults who have lived through this phenomenon can help to describe and illuminate the essence of their experiences.

### **Significance of the Research**

Parents, researchers, and practitioners dealing with CAs have had to generalize from the body of literature pertaining to other groups of international or interracial adoptees because there has been minimal research of this type dealing specifically with CAs (Brodzinsky et al., 1998; Hoshmand, Gere, & Wong, 2006). “Due to the limited research on adopted children from China and their adoptive families, professionals have relied on knowledge extrapolated from studies of other transnational adoption by Americans” (Hoshmand et al., 2006, p. 22). More research is needed pertaining to other racial compositions in adoption because the generalizability of those studies is limited to other types of adoptive families.

There have been very few studies conducted with CAs since the 1990s (Hoshmand, et al., 2006; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tong, 2005). Since most of these children have not reached the age of majority, many of the studies that have been done thus far have relied upon parent responses to the child’s physical or emotional development and cultural/ethnic identity (Cao & Pitman, 2008; Tan, 2004a; Tan, 2004b; Tan & Nakkula, 2004; Tessler, Gamache, & Liu, 1999). Those studies that did include the perspectives of the children were comprised of samples of adoptees who were younger than 14 years old (Adams, Tessler, & Gamache, 2005; Norris, 2006; Tessler, Gamache, & Adams, 2009; Tu, 2001).

There are some qualitative studies pertaining to CAs that have been conducted recently (Tan & Nakkula, 2004; Tu, 2001), but only one other study was located which attempted to obtain a first person perspective of the adoptees themselves (Tong, 2005). The age of the participants in Tong's study ranged from 9 to 12 years. Hoshmand, Gere, and Wong (2006) expressed a need for more qualitative narrative studies on CAs' identity development, stating, "the literature on transracial and intercountry adoption shows few studies of Chinese adoptees" (2006, p. 20). As of this date, the researcher has found no qualitative studies with older adolescent or young adult CAs. It is presumed that this is simply because the population has not been old enough to participate in in-depth interviews.

Further research specific to CAs is necessary, especially since the first members of this large group of adoptees are coming of age as adolescents and are forming their own personal and social identities (Lee, 2006). Adolescents and young adults between the ages of 16 and 20 are cognitively able to reflect upon their experiences growing up as adoptees from China. Adolescent and young adult adoptees can expound upon how their adoptive identity emerged through adolescence, and how they have done academically and socially.

### **Potential Benefits of Research**

The current study offered insight into the individual experiences of CAs from their own perspectives. It provided an opportunity for them to express their particular needs in school and community environments. The following broad question guided this study: What are the factors that contribute to CAs' academic success, healthy identity development, and close relationships?

The bulk of existing research on CAs has been quantitative in nature, primarily via survey research. A qualitative study that illuminates the personal experiences of the adoptees

themselves can be useful for providing the depth of information required to establish training programs for professionals working with CAs. The information gleaned from this study can be utilized to develop appropriate interventions and training programs for schools, counselors, social workers, adoptive families, and adoption agencies.

Prior research indicates that adoptive children are at a higher risk than their non-adoptive peers to exhibit delayed school performance, be referred for special education services, or to be treated for psychological and behavioral problems (van Ijzendoorn, Juffer, & Poelhuis, 2005; Miller et al., 2000). It would be constructive to provide training for education professionals regarding adoption related issues. A recent study conducted at Washington University (Taymans et al., 2008) revealed that very little information on adoption is provided to teachers and other education professionals, at either the pre-service or in-service level. If educators are not properly informed, many adoptive children and their families may suffer needlessly—emotionally and academically. Knowledge and understanding are keys to creating a feeling of inclusion, belonging, and acceptance within the classroom. In the current school environment where policies of zero tolerance and anti-bullying are the norm, it would be beneficial to provide educators with an accurate understanding of the particular needs of adoptive children.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

The following terms and definitions apply to this research and may not be readily defined. They are defined here for clarity:

1. *Adoption* is the social and legal process by which a parent-child relationship is established between two persons unrelated by birth (Sharma, McGue, & Benson, 1996a). Adoption can be further broken down into several more specific

categories: domestic, intercountry, international, and interracial (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). These are defined below.

2. *Domestic Adoption* occurs when the child and parents are of the same nationality and from the same country of residence (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001).
3. The *Adoptive parent* is the legal parent who is raising the child. The adoptive parents can be single or married women and men (Wood & Ng, 2001). In this study, the terms *parent, mother, and father* applies to the legal adoptive parent raising the child and with whom the child is living.
4. *Adoptive identity development* is defined by Grotevant and Von Korff (2011) as a lifelong process that deals with questions such as:

“Who am I as an adopted person?” “What does being adopted mean to me?”  
and “How does this fit into my understanding of myself, my relationships,  
family, and culture?” The overall process of identity formation may be more  
complex for adopted than non-adopted persons, because this additional layer  
of issues related to being adopted requires consideration” (2011, p. 591).
5. *International (or transnational) adoption* is the adoption of children from other countries, in this study, by United States citizens (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2011; Zamostny et al., 2003). Similarly, *Intercountry adoption* occurs when the child is adopted from another country and brought back to the parents’ home country to live (U.S. Department of State, 2012).
6. *Interracial (or transracial) adoption* has been defined as “the joining of racially different parents and children together in adoptive families” (Silverman & Feigelman, 1990, p. 187). In the literature, these terms are typically used to refer

to domestic adoptions within the United States in which White families are raising Black children. Since the children born in China adopted by American parents who are typically not Chinese by nationality or Asian by race, the terms *intercountry, international, transnational, interracial, and transracial adoption* are used interchangeably to refer to them in the literature.

7. The *birthparent/birthmother/birthfather* is the biological parent who gave birth to or fathered the child, but who is no longer parenting that child. The birthparent have given up all legal rights to the child, but not necessarily all contact (Wood & Ng, 2001). However, in the case of Chinese intercountry adoption, adoptees are classified as orphans prior to adoption. As a result, information regarding birthparents rarely exists and there is no birthfamily contact in virtually all Chinese adoptions (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001).
8. *Ethnic identity* is an individual's attachment and feeling of belonging to an ethnic group (Tan & Nakkula, 2004), or the ethnic component of the individual's social identity as part of an ethnic or racial minority group and how they relate to themselves and other members of their ethnic group (Phinney, 1990; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001).

### **Related Literature**

Nearly all of the research on transracial adoption since 1990 has been concerned with either psychological/psychosocial outcomes or racial/ethnic identity development (Lee, 2006). The literature reviewed that pertains to the psychological adjustment of transracial adoptees has been positive (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Simon & Alstein, 2002), and the few studies that exist with CAs in particular concur with those results (Norris, 2006; Tan,

2004a; Tan, 2004b). There has been significant focus in the research pertaining to the racial/ethnic identity development of CAs.

Identity development is a lifelong process, with adolescence being one of the more crucial stages (Erikson, 1968; Grotevant, 1997; Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011). Identity development is more complex for adoptees (Brodzinsky, 1987; Grotevant, 1997) and for ethnic minorities, particularly those growing up in biracial families (Adams et al., 2005; Lee, 2006). CAs are often ethnic/racial minorities within their families, schools, and communities. This review of the literature first discusses theories pertinent to the development of adoptive and ethnic/racial identity. This will follow with a brief review of recent research pertaining to the development of both adoptive identity and ethnic/racial identity.

## **Theory**

One of the limitations of adoption research is that there have been numerous theories used to describe adoption adjustment by current and previous researchers. They include genetic theory, risk and resilience theory, attachment theory, psychodynamic theory, developmental theory, social role theory, family systems theory, family life cycle theory, cognitive-developmental theory, stress and coping theory, and communication theory (Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2005; Zamostny et al., 2003). The current study seeks to describe the unique identity development of Chinese adopted adolescents using a combination of developmental and ecological systems perspectives.

Erikson (1968) described identity development across the life span as progressing through eight stages of conflict called the psychosocial stages of development (Erikson, 1980). Erikson's stages were expanded upon by Kirk (1988) and developed into a model for

adoptees called a psychosocial model of adoption adjustment by Brodzinsky (1987).

Brodzinsky's model was later adapted for use with CAs by Rojewski and Rojewski (2001).

This adapted model, the psychosocial tasks associated with parent-child adjustment in international adoptees, outlines the adoption specific tasks for the CA and parent(s) within the context of Erikson's stages of development (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001).

The stage of identity crisis, as defined by Erikson (1968) is the stage including adolescence during which there is much conflict. Erikson stated that "not until adolescence does the individual develop the prerequisites in physiological growth, mental maturation, and social responsibility to experience and pass through the crisis of identity" (1968, p. 91). According to Erikson's theory, identity development is the essential task of adolescence, during which society becomes integrated into the person's identity. Thus, this study focused on the identity development in CAs who are between 16 and 20 years old. Previous research has not allowed for in-depth work with this particular age group of CAs.

For internationally adopted children, it also seems necessary to consider identity development within the context of the systems surrounding them. Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory supports the need for and benefit of examining adopted children in the home, school, social groups, community, and larger society. Identity does not develop in a void; it develops within the contexts of the person's environment throughout the lifespan.

This research study investigated the personal perspectives of CAs' search for identity across the contexts of home, school, and community. Additionally, it attempted to provide a description of each participant's development over time as the child matured (defined by Bronfenbrenner as the chronosystem) within her immediate family and community

environments (the microsystem and mesosystem), and to seek out those interactions within the community, culture, and society that helped shape who she has become (the macrosystem and exosystem).

### **Adoptive Identity**

There are countless aspects of identity development, including occupation, race, religion, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Grotevant (1997) divides these aspects into two domains—those that are assigned to the individual without choice and those that are selected by choice. Examples of chosen domains include occupation, religion, or political ideals. Adoptive and ethnic/racial identities are assigned domains because the individual has no choice about their race, ethnicity, or whether they are adopted (Grotevant, 1997).

Adoptive identity development is concerned with how an individual constructs meaning about their adoption, and it develops over time, within the contexts of family, community, and society (Grotevant et al., 2000; Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011). Grotevant identified the three levels of adoptive identity as intrapsychic, relational contexts within the family, and interaction with contexts outside the family.

In 2008, Cao and Pitman began a longitudinal survey study to investigate how CAs formed their identity by observing their interactions between home, school, and community environments. Prior to Cao and Pitman's research there were "virtually no studies" (2008, p. 62) of this kind dealing with the effects of different environments on the adoptee. It was found that many of the participants were "caught between the notion of being Chinese and being American" (2008, p. 79), particularly in school and the community. Teachers and parents were often unable to adequately address the dilemmas these children experienced. Many of the children encountered racism. The more hidden forms of racism were often



interpreted by the parents as normal peer conflicts or a form of bullying, rather than as racism. All but one of the participants expressed wanting to be White—they felt ostracized by their peers for being Chinese. Cao and Pitman's research not only highlights the need for more research with CAs in the contexts of school and the community, but the importance of racial and ethnic identity within those contexts.

### **Ethnic/Racial Identity**

Ethnic identity has been described as one's sense of self as a member of an ethnic group (Phinney, 2003). CAs are primarily raised in multiracial families and thus develop their identity in environments within which their race and culture are often not well represented. Ethnic and racial identities are influenced by "environmental factors within and without the surrounding community of the family. Consequently, transracial adoptees' adaptation is altered and shaped by reinforcers in the immediate life setting, culture of social peer group, and societal changes" (Steward & Baden, 1995, pp. 10-11). Lee (2006) described the development of ethnic identity for CAs as a "hybrid identity" and "wholly unique" (p. 58) because they are caught between the White world of their families and the Asian minority world perceived by those around them.

Tessler and colleagues performed "the first major study conducted on adoption of children from China" (Hoshmand et al., 2006, p. 19). This was a longitudinal survey study conducted in three phases from 1999 to 2008 of how parents recognize and encourage the bicultural needs of their children. The first phase of the study in 1996 focused on the bicultural identity development of the CAs from their parents' perspectives, as the children were only 3 years old on average (Tessler et al., 1999). The second phase of the study was conducted from 2001 to 2002. This time the CAs, who were an average of 7 years old, were

given projective tests of social desirability characteristics pertaining to race (Adams et al., 2005, p. 26). The third phase of the study was conducted in 2008 when the average age of the children was 13.3 years. The parents and adoptees completed surveys. The results of this phase indicated that Chinese ethnicity was important to the CAs as part of their adolescent identity. It was also found that those parents placing an emphasis on the importance of their child's bicultural socialization growing up had a positive predictive effect on their adolescent's ethnic identity ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ) (Tessler et al., 2009).

Although the third phase of this study did consider the responses of the adoptees, 86% of the children were still in grades 6 through 9, with only 14% in grades 10 or above, so the respondents were still primarily young adolescents. The participants were surveyed and not personally interviewed. This further supports the need for more qualitative research with an older sample of adolescents and young adults utilizing personal interviews to obtain individual perspectives.

A second large-scale study pertaining to CAs, conducted from 1999 to 2000, was an internet survey study (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). This was an empirical investigation of how parents recognize the cultural development and needs of their Chinese adopted children. Surveys were administered to 339 families from 45 states in the United States and Canada. Overall, 339 adoptees with a median age of 3.1 years were represented. Since the children were quite young at the time, however, the study reflected only the parents' perspectives. The Rojewski's recommended future qualitative studies to determine how CAs perceived their lives at different stages of development—from childhood, to adolescence, and into adulthood.

For CAs the development of adoptive and ethnic/racial identity is incomplete. It is clear from the literature that current research has included CAs who were primarily under 14 years old. This literature review noticeably indicates that there are no studies of identity development from the perspectives of CAs who are in late adolescence or young adulthood.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Questions**

This study involved a sample of adolescent or young adult CAs, one parent of each adoptee, and one educator who has worked with each adoptee. The specific research questions that guided this investigation were:

1. How do adolescent and young adult CAs perceive their experiences in different sociological contexts: at home, with peers, at school, and in the community?
2. Retrospectively, how do CAs perceive their life experiences at different stages of development: during childhood, during adolescence, and at present?
3. How do parents view their child's family, social, and academic experiences?
4. How do educators (as defined by teachers, school counselors, coaches, and the like), who work with the CAs view their academic progress and overall adjustment?
5. How do the perspectives of the CAs compare to those of their parents and educators?

### **Description of the Participants and Sampling Procedures**

Participants for the study were recruited through the following efforts: (a) networking with personal contacts and adoption professionals; (b) posting notices inviting participation in the study in public buildings, on Internet list serves, and in adoption-related newsletters;

and (c) snowball or chain sampling, which is defined by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) as a method of sampling in which participants in a study are asked to refer other people that might be willing to participate.

The participants included female CAs between the ages of 16 and 20, at least one parent of each adoptee, and one educator recommended by the adoptee. The educator's name and contact information were provided by the participant. The nature of this study necessitated that all participants be self-selected volunteers. Therefore, purposeful sample selection was used in order to obtain a diverse group of participants. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) described this type of selection process as *maximum variation sampling*, which "involves selecting cases that illustrate the range of variation in the phenomena to be studied" (2003, p. 179), and that this type of sample requires at least 10 cases, or participant groups. Therefore, it was planned that between 8 and 12 cases would be included in the study. In order to obtain a maximum variation sample, participants representing different family types, ages, community settings, religious affiliations, and attitudes were sought.

### **Instrumentation**

**Adoptee demographic survey.** Each adoptee first completed a researcher-created 10-item demographic survey (Appendix A). Survey questions included current age, age at adoption, work, school, and marital status, level of contact with birth family (if any), how they found out about the study, and information pertaining to siblings in the adoptive family (including each siblings' current age, gender, and origin within the family).

**Adoptee interviews.** Each adoptee then participated in an individual semi-structured interview with the researcher. The interview protocol was developed by the researcher (Appendix B). The protocol contained 46 open-ended questions separated into different

sections by context including Home and Family, School and Academics, Future Plans, Peers and Social Relationships, and Community. Interviews took approximately 90 minutes to 2 hours to complete, and were audio-recorded.

**The Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory (PASCI).** Each adoptee completed the PASCI (Fleming, 2007), located in Appendix C, for supplementary quantitative data pertaining to the respondents' self-concept. The results served as a comparison to the respondents' expressed views of their identity in the interviews. The PASCI was selected because it was designed to operationalize nine constructs of a multifaceted, hierarchical theory of self-concept proposed by Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976). The nine subscales include: Self-regard, Social Acceptance, Academic Ability, Verbal Ability, Mathematical Ability, Physical Appearance, Physical Ability, Parental Acceptance, and Social Anxiety. The instrument includes 45 items, 5 for each subscale, each containing a 7-point Likert-scale response format. The PASCI is a self-reporting rating scale which is appropriate for use with adolescents and young adults from grade 6 through senior year in college.

Although the PASCI yields quantitative, ordinal data, the results of the survey were used in a qualitative manner in this research as additional support to the qualitative data from the interviews.

**Parent demographic survey.** After the adoptee interview was completed, the researcher interviewed the respective parent(s). The parent(s) completed the demographic survey (Appendix D), a 22-item questionnaire created by the researcher. The survey contained items inquiring about the parent(s)' gender, age, race, marital status, education level, occupation, and the age and gender of other children in the family. A section on school

information was designed to gather data regarding the number of schools the adoptee attended and the racial demographics within those schools (including Caucasian, Latino, African American, Asian, and an “Other” category). A similar final section was used to collect the same information regarding racial representation in the respective neighborhoods in which the adoptee lived.

**Parent interviews.** An individual semi-structured interview was conducted with the parent(s) using a researcher-created interview protocol (Appendix E). The protocol contained 20 open-ended questions separated into different sections by context including family, school, and community/social experiences. The interview was designed to elicit information from the parent(s) about the child’s, positive, negative, or unique experiences growing up as a CA. The parent(s) survey and interview took between 1 hour to 90 minutes to complete, and were audio-recorded.

**Educator demographic survey.** The final interview in each case was conducted with the educator. Each educator completed an 11-item demographic survey (Appendix F) written by the researcher. The survey contained items inquiring about the educator’s gender, age, race, education level, professional position, experience, and special training. A separate section on school information was designed to gather data regarding the capacity in which the educator knew the adoptee, the level and type of school the adopted child attends/attended, the racial demographics within that school, and any specific training in adoption.

**Educator interviews.** An individual semi-structured interview was then conducted with the educator using a researcher-created interview protocol (Appendix G). The protocol contained 16 open-ended questions in two sections including academics and peer/social

experiences. The interview was designed to elicit information from the educator about the adoptee's self-concept and positive, negative, or unique experiences attending school as a CA. The educator interviews took between 30 minutes to 1 hour, and were audio-recorded.

**Field notes.** The researcher maintained field notes throughout the data gathering process. Two types of field notes were recorded: descriptive and reflective. The former included portraits of the participants, reconstruction of the dialogue, description of the physical setting, accounts of particular events, depiction of activities, and the observer's behavior. The latter included reflections on analysis, method, ethical dilemmas and conflicts, the observer's frame of mind, and points of clarification (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

### **Research Design**

A multiple case study qualitative research design was utilized in this study. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define a multi-case study as involving two or more participants in order to provide a detailed examination of a particular event. Each case or participant group consisted of the adoptee, at least one of their parents, and one educator recommended by the adoptee. Case study research involves inductive analysis of the data without preconceived notions of what is to be found (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). It requires a blend of theoretical bases with the themes that emerge from the data. A phenomenological approach would have been an option for this study. However, this approach is based on continued sampling until the data have reached a point of redundancy—an option that was not practical, given the constraints of time and funding for the research. “Unless the group is very large one soon comes to the point at which efforts to net additional members cannot be justified in terms of the additional outlay of energy and resources” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 233).

## **Description of the Analyses**

The overarching research question of the investigation was: From their own perspective as adolescents and young adults, what is the essence of the life experience of being a CA in different sociological contexts of home, with peers, at school, and within the community? The researcher conducted individual interviews with each adoptee in order to fulfill this primary goal. The voices of the CAs were critical to answering the aforementioned research questions.

The rationale for including the perspectives of the parents and educators is twofold. The first was to provide triangulation of the data through different sources of information—the adoptee, parent, and educator. In a naturalistic inquiry, triangulation is one mode “of improving the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible. . . . One often encounters phrases such as, ‘No report was credited unless it could be verified by another person’” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305). The second purpose for using these additional sources was to satisfy the goals of the study, which were to investigate the home, school, and community experiences of the adoptee. The additional perspectives of the parents and educators were intended to provide thicker descriptions of the experiences across the three contextual environments.

In order to allow themes to emerge, transcripts were coded using appropriate schemas that were determined as the analysis proceeded. Coding was initially done by hand, and then NVivo 9 (QSR International, 2010) a qualitative statistical software program, was utilized to aid in the process of coding and analyzing the interview transcripts.



## **Data Collection Procedures and Timeline**

Whenever possible, the researcher investigated each case separately, beginning with the adoptee interview. Then, the respective parent and educator were interviewed. The first case provided “a focus to define the parameters of the others” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 63). The researcher set aside one month’s time for conducting and analyzing the first case. Subsequent cases were then conducted one at a time, whenever possible, with each requiring a minimum of four weeks to conduct.

## **Summary**

This chapter began with a brief discussion of the changes in adoption in the United States over time. The rationale for this study, statement of the problem, and significance and potential benefits of the research were presented. A list of relevant definitions was provided. A brief synopsis of the related literature to the current research was offered. This included a discussion of the theories of Erikson (1968) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) as underlying assumptions made by the researcher in conducting the research. Also discussed was the research on adoptive identity development and ethnic/racial identity development in adoptees.

Next, the methodology section described the research questions of the study, a description of the participants and sampling procedures, and instrumentation used. Finally, justification for the selection of the multi-case study research design, description of the analyses, and data collection procedures concluded the chapter. The next chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature pertaining to history of international adoption in the United States, and Chinese adoption, in particular.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This qualitative study attempted to describe the essence of the experience of being a Chinese adoptee (CA) in the United States. In five main sections, this chapter will provide an historical background of adoption, the underlying theoretical bases for the research, and a detailed overview of the related research pertaining to the topics of interracial, international, and Chinese adoption.

The chapter begins with a history of transracial and international adoption in the United States, and domestic and international adoption in China. Next, Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of identity development and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory will be discussed to provide a theoretical framework for the topic of identity development over time and within various ecological contexts. Following the theory, a brief review of early adoption research will lead into a discussion on the specific areas of research in the field, namely adoptive identity and racial/ethnic identity development. Particular emphasis will be placed on interracial, international, and CAs. Subsequently, the more recent research on Korean adoptees and then CAs will be discussed in detail. The chapter concludes with a summary of the patterns, themes, and gaps in the research on adoption and Chinese adoption in particular which support the need for the current study.

### **The History of Interracial and International Adoption**

#### **Domestic Interracial Adoption**

The very first adoption statute in the United States was passed in Massachusetts in 1851 (Kirk, 1981). Early on, most domestic adoptions were between relatives. Around the turn of the century, many families were dislocated and separated by immigration and industrialization. As a result, non-relative adoptions started to become more common during

this time. Interracial adoption, however, was still extremely rare (Silverman & Feigelman, 1990).

The Indian Adoption Project of the late 1950s was one of the first modern day efforts within the United States at interracial adoption. This was a joint venture between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) that was initiated to provide homes for displaced Native American children from reservations. The Indian Adoption Project was designed to assimilate Native American children into conventional society (Lee, 2003; Silverman & Feigelman, 1990).

Shortly thereafter, in the 1960s, American child advocacy groups searched for ways to provide permanent, stable homes for large numbers of Black orphaned children in the foster care system. The National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) rapidly claimed “vehement opposition to the practice of placing black children with white families” (NABSW, as cited in Silverman & Feigelman, 1990, p. 189). By 1972, the NABSW proposed a resolution claiming that interracial adoption was a form of cultural genocide for African Americans. Native Americans responded similarly with the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

Social service agencies took action in response to this political push to exclude interracial domestic adoptions by revising their adoption standards to include a preference for same-race placements of minority children (Lee, 2003; Silverman & Feigelman, 1990). The changing landscape and regulation of domestic interracial adoption policy in the United States during this time might have encouraged more prospective adoptive parents to consider international adoption as an alternative to domestic.

## **International Adoption in the United States**

It was not until after World War II that the practice of international adoption began in the United States. After the war ended, White American families slowly began to adopt orphaned children from countries in Asia. However, the most drastic influx of international adoptees came as a result of the Korean War. Harry Holt, founder of the Holt International Adoption Agency, was instrumental in developing one of the first formal international adoption programs. Holt and his wife had adopted several Korean children of their own (Silverman & Feigelman, 1990).

As of 2010 about 165,000 children from South Korea had been adopted in countries around the world, with over 100,000 of them in the United States alone (Tessler, Tuan, & Lee Shiao, 2011; Volkman, 2003). It has been customary practice in Korean adoption that the adoptees are escorted via airplane and delivered to their adoptive parents in the United States. Although Korean adoptions have decreased over the last two decades, South Korea still remains one of the top five sending countries at present (Retrieved from [http://adoption.state.gov/about\\_us/statistics.php](http://adoption.state.gov/about_us/statistics.php), April 11, 2012). Lee (2003) estimated that Korean adoptees represent approximately 10% of the Korean-American population.

Today, approximately one out of five adopted children in the United States is an international adoptee. Of those adopted under the age of two, that number increases to two out of every five (Tessler et al., 2011). In the early 1990s when China first opened its doors internationally, the number of Chinese children adopted annually quickly surpassed those from South Korea and other countries (Tessler et al., 2011). Since 1999 alone 66,630 children have been adopted from China while only 18,605 children have been adopted from

Korea during the same time period (Retrieved from [http://adoption.state.gov/about\\_us/statistics.php](http://adoption.state.gov/about_us/statistics.php), February 21, 2012).

Despite the large numbers of children adopted from Korea over the past 50 years, multiracial families were not very widespread early on. For reasons already discussed multiracial families were discouraged, whether domestic or international. As a result, parents were more likely to downplay the racial and cultural differences of interracial adopted children. The concepts of racial and cultural assimilation were practiced by most multiracial families (Lee, 2003; Volkman, 2003). This is often described as a “colorblind mentality” which has been defined as a view of others “without reference to ethnicity and race” (Lee, 2003, p. 721). Organizations such as the NABSW and the Bureau of Indian Affairs responded accordingly by arguing that interracial adoptions were considered to be immoral because these children were being integrated into the majority culture without respect for their cultural and ethnic roots (Lee, 2003; Silverman & Feigelman, 1990; Volkman, 2003).

In the early 1990s, families with adopted Chinese children faced a different social and political milieu than those who had previously adopted Korean children. They were fortunate to have the benefits of a more open society. Tessler et al. (1999) attributed this difference to several factors. The first was a more racially and ethnically diverse society in the United States concerned with celebrating diversity rather than assimilating adoptees into the majority culture. Another is that bi-cultural socialization has often been a goal for parents of CAs. Tessler and colleagues propose that parents of CAs might have been more inclined to support bi-cultural socialization in their children because they—unlike the Korean adoptive parents that came before them—had to physically travel to China to adopt their children. The trip to China provided parents with a first-hand experience of another, very

different culture, and might have perhaps encouraged them to raise their children with an appreciation and understanding of their Chinese beginnings. Lastly, Tessler and colleagues also pointed out that adoptions from China have not been associated with wartime issues between the two countries, as was the case with Korea. The relations between China and the United States have been more peaceful, which might have encouraged the desire of parents to cultivate Chinese heritage in their children.

### **China's History of Adoption**

According to the United States Census Bureau, China has had the largest population of any country since 1950. Projections are that China will remain the largest country until it is surpassed by India, which is predicted to happen around 2025 (United States Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/population/international/data/idb/rank.php>, retrieved March 3, 2012).

**The one-child policy.** In 1979, in response to the increasing problem of over-population, China enacted what is commonly called the one-child policy (Dowling & Brown, 2009; Hoshmand et al., 2006; Tan, 2004b; Tan, 2009). This policy included incentives for families who pledged to adhere to the policy, which included better housing, educational opportunities for their children, healthcare, and increased salaries. On the other hand, those who violated the policy were subject to hefty monetary fines and penalties—including the possible termination of employment, and loss of the aforementioned privileges (Dowling & Brown, 2009). The monetary fines could be as high as one year's salary. If a family had already paid a fine for one over-quota child, the fines for each subsequent child increased sharply. Over-quota families who repeatedly violated the one-child policy have in some

cases even been required to submit to sterilization procedures and abortions (Johnson, Banghan, & Liyao, 1998).

The one-child policy has been adhered to more in urban areas than rural. In rural China there is more poverty, fewer educational opportunities, and inferior living conditions (Tan, 2009). This makes it essentially impossible for families to pay over-quota fines to keep their children, or to utilize efficient birth control methods. Women in rural areas are left with fewer choices and often resort to abandoning their second or successive children, or seeking the services of an illegal adoption broker (Dowling & Brown, 2009). “Once marked as an over-quota family, they may experience such heavy pressure and scrutiny that it becomes impossible to go forward with another pregnancy” (Johnson et al., 1998, p. 478).

**Gender disproportion.** Historically in China, male children have been preferred over female. There is a cultural preference for male children over female to maintain the patrilineal line (Dowling & Brown, 2009; Hoshmand et al., 2006; Tan, 2009). When a daughter marries in China she becomes the property of the husband’s family. “Daughters “marry away” and join their husband’s family, where they are obligated to support his parents” (Johnson et al., 1998, p. 475). There is no social security system in China, so Chinese sons are expected to financially support and care for their elderly parents in old age. Sons are also expected to perform manual labor and carry on the family name (Dowling & Brown, 2009; Tan, 2009; Wang, n.d). Resultantly, pregnant mothers are often pressured by the husband’s family to produce a boy. “The combination of cultural preference for boys, poverty, male-dominance in rural family decision-making, educational deprivation and one-child policy is considered a major cause of the relinquishment of female infants born to rural parents” (Tan, 2009, p. 13).

An unfortunate result of the one-child policy combined with the cultural preferences for male children, has been a considerable disproportion in the population of males over females (Dowling & Brown, 2009; Tan, 2009). The Chinese government has no official record of the number of abandoned children. In 1998, unnamed Chinese sources had conservatively estimated that number to be between 100,000 and 160,000 children—approximately 98% of which were girls (Johnson et al., 1998). In the early 1990s, China also enacted strict requirements for domestic adoptions, making the situation even more pronounced. Legislation mandated that only those couples with no children over the age of 35 could adopt a child domestically within China. This served to increase the number of children in Chinese orphanages even more so.

**Policy changes in China.** Perhaps realizing the detrimental effects of the one child policy and adoption legislation, China began to allow a small number of orphans to be adopted internationally starting in 1989 (Tessler et al., 1999). At first, these adoptions were done on an informal basis. By 1991, China formally enacted their first international adoption law permitting large numbers of Chinese orphans to be adopted internationally. International adoption was then centralized by the government under the Chinese Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA) in 1996. While China's own domestic adoption policy was quite rigid—limiting adoption to childless couples; their international adoption policies were looser—initially allowing couples over the age of 35 (with or without children), single men or women, and gay or lesbian couples to adopt Chinese orphans (Volkman, 2003). Over time, though, China's international adoption policies also became stricter. In 2002, CCAA tightened the quota for single men and women, and in 2007 it changed its policy to only allow heterosexual married couples to adopt a child (Tan, 2006).



While China was tightening its international adoption policy, it began to relax its own domestic policy. In 1999, the age at which married couples could adopt was reduced to 30 years old, and those couples with one child already were also allowed to adopt domestically (Dowling & Brown, 2009; Johnson et al., 1998). In 2002, the one-child policy was also revised to permit a second child to couples living in rural areas, families with minority group status, and couples who were both only children themselves (Dowling & Brown, 2009).

Over the past 20 years, the one-child policy, domestic adoption, and international adoption have all contributed to the success of China's population control efforts. Baochang, Feng, Zhigang, and Erli, (2007) recently reported that approximately 63% of Chinese families are still restricted to one child, and that China has been successful at reducing birth rates to the mandated levels. Unfortunately, there still remains a sizeable gender imbalance. Tan (2006) reported that "in some provinces the ratio is now 114 males for every 100 females for children under the age of four" (p. 18). However, China's population still continues to increase each year (United States Department of State Website, 2012).

### **Chinese Adoption in the United States**

Since China's international adoption law was first passed in 1991, there have been approximately 74,000 Chinese children, ninety percent of them girls, adopted in the United States (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute Website, 2011; United States Department of State Website, 2011). In 1996, the number of children adopted from China was the largest annual number of international adoptions from any one country (Hollingsworth, 2003). This group of adoptees represents the largest single group of international adoptees who are presently under 20 years of age.

“There has never been another cohort of transnational, transracial adoptees that has arrived in the United States in such large numbers, in so few years, of roughly the same age and mostly the same gender” (Volkman, 2003, p. 30). Thus, families with CAs have as a group fostered connections through organizations such as Families with Children from China (FCC), maintained contact with adoption travel groups, and exposed their children to various Chinese cultural and language programs. To reiterate, Chinese adoptive families face a different society which is more accepting of multiculturalism than the Korean adoptive families that came before them.

These parents are able to foster cultural pride by bringing their children to Kung Fu classes, Chinese language classes, and Chinese New Year celebrations. Many families bring their children back to China for heritage trips and missionary work in orphanages. There are also numerous online networks, forums, electronic mailing lists, discussion, and support groups pertaining to Chinese adoption. Most of these cater to the adoptive parents, however.

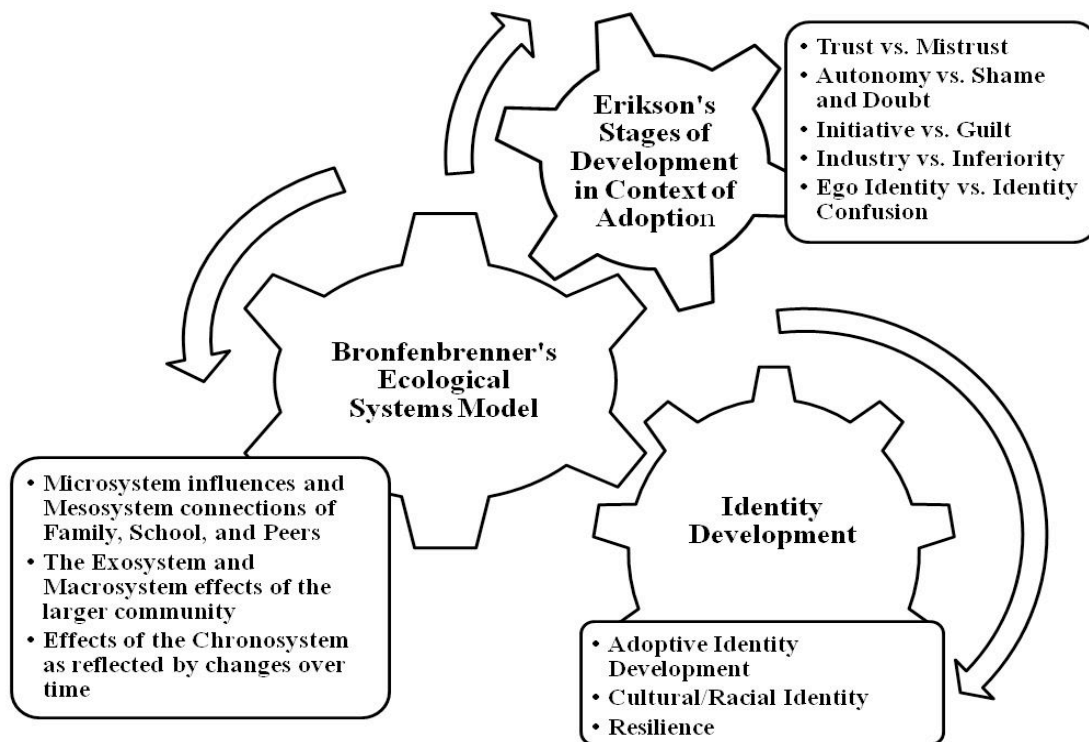
As CAs have grown older, programs are beginning to appear which are created by and for the adoptees themselves. In 2007, an online community was created for CAs worldwide by six young women who were adopted from China. The blog spot is called One World: Chinese Adoptee Links at [www.chineseadoptee.com](http://www.chineseadoptee.com). Most recently, in 2011, four teenage CAs started another network called China’s Children International. The goal of their network is to connect CAs around the world and to give back to Chinese orphanages. Their website is at [www.chinaschildreninternational.org](http://www.chinaschildreninternational.org).

This section has reviewed the historical background for the current research on CAs. It began with a discussion of the beginnings of interracial and international adoption within the United States, including oppositions to these practices. Then the history of China’s

adoption practices and the one-child policy were discussed and related to how over population and gender views in China resulted in the opening of China's international adoption program. With this historical background in place, the discussion now turns to the theoretical justifications for the topic of Chinese adoption.

### **Underlying Theories**

This research study relied upon a combination of theoretical underpinnings for research on this topic. Figure 2 provides a visualization of the blend of the two theories of Erik Erikson's (1968) stages of psychosocial identity development and Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model. The details of these two theories in the specific context of adoption are now discussed.



*Figure 2.* Adoptive identity development over time and across contexts. A blend of theoretical concepts of Erikson (1968) and Bronfenbrenner (1979).

## **Erikson's Stages of Identity Development**

David Brodzinsky (1987) a seminal researcher and theorist on adoption, authored an article on the psychosocial adjustment to adoption adjustment based upon Erikson's (1968, 1980) stages of development and David Kirk's (1964, 1988) work on adoptive parents' patterns of coping with differences. In it, Brodzinsky proposed the psychosocial model of adoption adjustment. This model was later adapted and expanded upon by Rojewski and Rojewski (2001) for use with a national large-scale study on CAs. Table 1 summarizes these adoption specific tasks for both the parents and the adoptive child, and includes culturally influenced tasks of development, as well. This adapted model, the psychosocial tasks associated with parent-child adjustment in intercountry adoption, outlines the adoption specific tasks for the CA and parent(s) within the context of Erikson's stages of development (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001).

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Table 1

*Psychosocial Tasks Associated with Parent-Child Adjustment in Intercountry Adoption*

Erikson's psychosocial tasks	Adoption-related tasks (parents)	Adoption-related tasks (child)	Culturally influenced tasks for adoptive parent and/or child
Infancy <i>Trust vs. Mistrust</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolve feelings regarding infertility</li> <li>• Cope with uncertainty of adoption</li> <li>• Adjust to transition of child in home</li> <li>• Find appropriate role models; develop realistic expectations of adoptive parenthood</li> <li>• Cope with social stigma on adoption</li> <li>• Develop secure attachment relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust to transition to adoptive home</li> <li>• Develop secure attachment relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on age, child may adjust to new culture; foods, language, schedules, expectations, etc.</li> <li>• Deal with loss of privacy for entire family (approach by strangers)</li> <li>• Cope with the social stigma regarding transracial or transcultural adoption</li> <li>• Determine how or if to acknowledge parent-child differences</li> </ul>
Toddlerhood <i>Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt</i> Preschool years <i>Initiative vs. Guilt</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cope with the anxiety and uncertainty of initial discussion about adoption</li> <li>• Create atmosphere in which questions about adoption and race can be freely explored</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about birth and reproduction</li> <li>• Adjust to initial information about adoption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize differences in physical appearance</li> <li>• Adjust to knowledge about and expression of Chinese heritage</li> </ul>

*Note.* From *Intercountry adoption from China: Examining cultural heritage and other postadoption issues* (pp. 44-45), by J. W. Rojewski and J. L. Rojewski, 2001, Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey. Copyright 2001 by J. W. Rojewski and J. L. Rojewski. Reprinted with permission. Previously adapted from "Adjustment to Adoption: A Psychosocial Perspective," by D. M. Brodzinsky, 1987, *Clinical Psychology Review*, 7(1), 24-47; *Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self*, by D. M. Brodzinsky, M. D. Schechter, and R. M. Henig, 1992, New York: Anchor Books; and, *Exploring Adoptive Family Life*, by H. D. Kirk, 1988, Port Angeles, WA: Ben-Simon.

Table 1 (continued)

*Psychosocial Tasks Associated with Parent-Child Adjustment in Intercountry Adoption*

Erikson's psychosocial tasks	Adoption-related tasks (parents)	Adoption-related tasks (child)	Culturally influenced tasks for adoptive parent and/or child
Middle childhood <i>Industry vs. Inferiority</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help child master meaning of adoption</li> <li>• Help child in initial stages of adaptive grieving</li> <li>• Maintain atmosphere where questions about adoption can be freely explored in light of complications brought about by the grief process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand meanings and implications of being adopted; sense of loss or grief</li> <li>• Search for answers regarding origin and reasons for relinquishment</li> <li>• Cope with stigma of adoption</li> <li>• Cope with peer reactions to adoption</li> <li>• Cope with adoption-related loss(es)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cope with physical differences from family members</li> <li>• Understand the meaning of being in a racial minority</li> <li>• Develop awareness of cultural heritage</li> </ul>
Adolescence <i>Ego Identity vs. Identity Confusion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help adolescent cope with genealogical bewilderment</li> <li>• Help adolescent grieve for the lost self (and loss of birth parents and origins)</li> <li>• Maintain atmosphere where questions about adoption can be freely explored in light of the complications associated with grief process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore meanings and implications of being adopted</li> <li>• Connect adoption to sense of identity</li> <li>• Resolve family romance fantasy</li> <li>• Cope with adoption-related loss, especially related to the sense of self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realize search for biological parents is impossible</li> <li>• Connect race and cultural heritage to identity development</li> <li>• Cope with physical differences from family members and most of society</li> <li>• Develop racial identity</li> </ul>

*Note.* From *Intercountry adoption from China: Examining cultural heritage and other postadoption issues* (pp. 44-45), by J. W. Rojewski and J. L. Rojewski, 2001, Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey. Copyright 2001 by J. W. Rojewski and J. L. Rojewski. Reprinted with permission. Previously adapted from "Adjustment to Adoption: A Psychosocial Perspective," by D. M. Brodzinsky, 1987, *Clinical Psychology Review*, 7(1), 24-47; *Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self*, by D. M. Brodzinsky, M. D. Schechter, and R. M. Henig, 1992, New York: Anchor Books; and, *Exploring Adoptive Family Life*, by H. D. Kirk, 1988, Port Angeles, WA: Ben-Simon.

**Developmental stages in the context of international adoption.** Erikson's (1968)

first stage of development is the infancy stage during which there is the conflict of trust versus mistrust. Brodzinsky (1987) discussed the infancy stage and the additional complexities involved for adoptees and adoptive families during this time. Adoptive parenting is more complex because of the following six issues: (a) infertility; (b) uncertain timing of the child's arrival; (c) intrusiveness of the adoption process; (d) insufficient role models of other adoptive families (as compared to non-adoptive family role models); (e) social stigma, especially in cases of interracial or international adoptions; and (f) the existence of pre-adoption adversities in children who are adopted at an older age (typically beyond one year of age). According to Bowlby (1973) attachment can be an issue for those children who were never able to attach or whose primary relationships have been severed

The second and third stages of Erikson's (1968) model are concerned with the development of autonomy and initiative. This involves the ability to separate from parent figures both physically and psychologically as the child grows. According to Brodzinsky, "In adoptive families, the child's strivings for autonomy and initiative are complicated by one of the most difficult tasks faced by adoptive parents—telling the child that he or she is adopted" (1987, p. 33). During this time, the child's natural tendency to separate from the parent(s) is complicated by confusion and possible anxiety issues resulting from this "telling process," as Brodzinsky calls it. Nevertheless, some children revel in the "telling process" at this age. Many adopted children ask their parents to tell them their adoption story over and over again because it is often a joyful story that emphasizes how happy their parents were (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001).

As adopted children move into the middle childhood stage of industry versus inferiority, they may begin to understand for the first time that there is a flip side to their adoption story. They start to comprehend that in order to be “chosen” they were first “given up” by their birthparents. It may be the first time they experience feelings of grief at the loss of a birth family or their roots. Brodzinsky calls this phase “adaptive grieving” (1987, p. 36) and considers it to be a normal phase of development for adoptees in response to many losses. Such losses may include, biological ties, permanence of relationships with adoptive parents, loss of self, genealogical continuity, cultural heritage, and social status associated with being different from others. Furthermore, these losses must be dealt with in the absence of any public recognitions or ceremonies such as a divorce or funeral (Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990).

Middle childhood includes the extension of the child’s world to include school, peers, and social groups. Children of this age may begin to notice they look different from other members of their family or their peers. Brodzinsky’s (1987) work asserts that adoptees cannot distinguish between birth and adoption until about six years old. Between 8 and 11 years, however, adopted children can begin to comprehend the more complex issues of adoption. Children begin to understand that their birthparents relinquished them; and that birthparents might have had other options. They may begin to wonder why they were relinquished and start to reflect on it emotionally. This can lead to behavioral or emotional problems in school aged children. Parents and teachers should be aware that this stage can present these developmental issues and signs of grieving, and that this is part of normal development for them (Brodzinsky, 1990).



The stage of identity crisis, as defined by Erikson (1968) is the stage including adolescence during which there can be much conflict. Erikson stated that “not until adolescence does the individual develop the prerequisites in physiological growth, mental maturation, and social responsibility to experience and pass through the crisis of identity” (1968, p. 91). According to Erikson’s theory, identity development is the essential task of adolescence, during which society becomes integrated into the person’s identity. Separation from the family is one of the primary goals of the stage of adolescence. As Rojewski and Rojewski explain, this can be “complicated for adoptees, who have both biological (genetic influences) and adoptive (environmental influences) families” (2001, p. 48). As a result, it can be a particularly difficult stage for adoptees.

**Adoptive identity research and developmental theory.** Consistent with Erikson’s (1968) theory and Brodzinsky’s work is the subsequent work of Grotevant and his colleagues (Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004; Grotevant, 1997, 2003; Grotevant et al., 2000; Grotevant & McRoy, 1998; Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011; Grotevant, Wrobel, van Dulmen, & McRoy, 2001) that also relies upon Eriksonian foundations in the identity development of adoptees, particularly the period of adolescence. Grotevant describes the stages as “epigenetic” meaning that each stage of development influences the next, and that it is an ongoing developmental process that continues throughout one’s lifetime. Also of emphasis is that adopted children develop psychosocially, meaning in the contexts of home, school, community, and greater environments. This lends support to the inclusion of ecological systems theory as an additional theoretical basis to the present study. This ecological theory is discussed next.

## **Ecological Systems Theory**

For internationally adopted children, it also seems necessary to consider the adoptee's development within the context of the systems surrounding them and to consider the adoptee's biological contributions, as well. Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1990, 2000) ecological systems theory supports the need for and benefit of examining adopted children in the home, school, social groups, community, and larger society. Children do not develop in a void; they develop in response to the relationships that develop within different environments around them, throughout the lifespan. It is similar to the work of Vygotsky with a sociocultural emphasis. Bronfenbrenner later renamed the bioecological systems theory to incorporate the role of the individual's biopsychological characteristics, as well (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). Figure 3 represents Bronfenbrenner's theory.

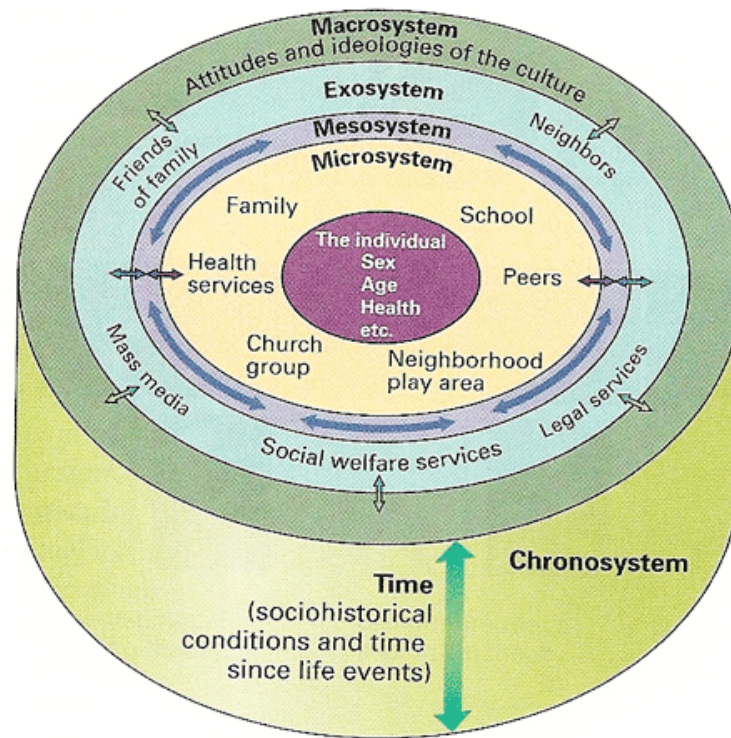


Figure 3. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. From *Adolescence* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.) by J. Santrock, 2007, New York: McGraw Hill. Reprinted with permission from the McGraw-Hill Companies.

The earliest formulation of this model is what was described by Bronfenbrenner as a set of “nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). At the center of these “nested dolls” is the individual child including biological, emotional, and cognitive elements. The elements change as the child grows and matures.

The individual child lives directly within what is called the microsystem. The microsystem includes those systems, individuals, groups, or programs with which the child has direct contact. Examples are the family, school, neighborhood, church group, peer

group, or childcare environment. The individual is not a passive recipient within these contexts, but is rather an active participant. As Lee (2006) expressed, CAs should not be depicted as passive victims who came from different circumstances and have been rescued by caring adoptive families, now living a privileged American life. Lee felt that they should rather be considered “transnational and transracial individuals who can play an active role in defining and shaping their lives” (2006, p. 56). The influences of the microsystem are bi-directional, meaning the child can affect the member of the system and vice versa. A simple example of a bi-directional influence is when a child manipulates a parent to get what they want. The influence works in both directions—an interplay or dance between the two.

The next concentric level of the nest is the mesosystem, which is where connections and interactions occur between the contexts of the individual’s microsystem. A simple explanation is that “it is a system of two or more microsystems” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 1016). Examples include interactions between family and church, teacher and parent, or parent and health care provider. An adoptive parent might feel the needs of their child are not being met sufficiently at school or in the local community and subsequently decide to switch schools or neighborhoods for the benefit of the child.

From the mesosystem, the nest expands to the exosystem. These are the forces that may positively or negatively interact upon the child. They are the aspects of the larger social system that interact with some component of the child’s microsystem. Examples include the parent(s)’ place of work, family social networks, or influences of the media. For the adopted child, an effect of the exosystem might occur when the child views a movie with a theme about an abandoned child in an orphanage, or a child who is taken away from their family by

a social service member. Oftentimes, topics such as these can affect an adoptee emotionally, and others might not even be aware of its possible emotional significance.

The outermost circle of the nest is the macrosystem. These are the attitudes and values of the child's larger society, such as cultural customs, laws, or religious beliefs. For the adopted child, there may be disparities that exist between the cultures and customs of their birthculture and home culture. The family may struggle with developing a cultural/ethnic identity, feeling as if they "have one foot in two worlds forever" (Tong, 2005, p. 312).

A final component of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original model was the chronosystem. This system represents the passing of time and its effect upon the changes that occur in both the child's individual state (internal) and changes in the other systems around them (external). This represents the pattern of events and transitions that occur over the lifecourse. An example of an internal transition might be the onset of adolescence. An example of an external transition might be if the adoptee locates and/or makes contact with birthparents, and the resulting effects that event would have on their development. The chronosystem links back to Erikson's (1968) developmental theory.

This section discussed the connections between Erikson's (1968) stages of psychosocial identity development and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model with the topic of the development of identity for international adoptees. Erikson's first four stages of identity development were discussed in terms of adoptive identity and racial/ethnic identity, based upon the works of several adoption researchers (Brodzinsky 1987; Brodzinsky, Schechter, & Henig, 1992; Kirk, 1988; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). The unique tasks of international adoptees in each of these stages of development were outlined.

Next, the importance of the interactions between different ecological contexts of family, school, community, cultural norms and values upon the international adoptee were discussed in terms of their identity development. This provides the basis for a review of the empirical research on adoptees, particularly interracial and international adoptees.

### **Characteristics of Adoptees**

Initially, according to Brodzinsky (1987), the needs of adoptive parents were the primary concern in adoption and adoption research. Fortunately, by the 1950s, the focus transferred to the needs of the adopted children, particularly their physical welfare, mental health, and social and emotional needs.

### **Mental Health Concerns**

Numerous studies from the 1960s through 1980s concluded that adopted children were over-represented in mental health programs (Brodzinsky, 1987). There were reported to be a higher proportion of adopted children in these programs than in the overall population. “Adopted children are referred for psychological treatment two to five times more frequently than are their non-adopted peers” (Grotevant, 1997, p. 13). Some of the symptoms present in clinical samples of adoptees were aggression, impulsivity, low self-confidence, feelings of alienation, anti-sociality, learning difficulties, and various pediatric health conditions, including hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder (Brodzinsky, 1987; Grotevant, 1997).

Several reasons for this higher rate of adopted children in clinical programs have been offered. One is that adoptive parents are usually highly educated and are comfortable with the human services and social work providers as a result of the adoption process. Another reason is that many adopted children come from disadvantaged situations in which they may

have been exposed to poor prenatal care, drug or alcohol exposure during pregnancy, abuse or neglect, or multiple placements and caretakers (Grotevant, 1997).

### **Social and Emotional Issues**

Alternatively, Brodzinsky (1987) explained that comparison studies with non-clinical samples of adoptees have revealed little difference between adopted and non-adopted groups, especially in infants and toddlers. His research concluded that the majority of adopted children function normally in behavior, emotional development, and academics. However, he claimed that older adopted children experienced more issues than did preschoolers or infants (Brodzinsky, 1987).

Brodzinsky and colleagues conducted two studies with non-clinical samples of older school aged children and adolescents. In the first study (Brodzinsky, Schechter, Braff, & Singer, 1984), mothers and teachers rated the adopted children as possessing higher ratings of psychological and school related problems and lower social competence and school achievement than their non-adopted peers. In the follow-up study by Brodzinsky, Radice, Huffman, and Merkler (1986, as cited in Brodzinsky, 1987), parents reported more clinically significant symptoms such as uncommunicative behaviors, hyperactivity, depression, and aggression.

At this time, Brodzinsky (1987) claimed that there were numerous limitations in the existing body of research on adoption. Limitations included: (a) small clinical samples; (b) a lack of differentiation between related (i.e., kinship adoptions) and non-related groups of adoptees; (c) a lack of controls on numerous variables such as age at adoption, socioeconomic status, pre-adoptive conditions, and family composition; and (d) frequent use of invalid and unreliable instruments and methods.

## **Social and Emotional Adjustment of Adolescent Adoptees**

Investigations that follow attempted to address some of the above mentioned concerns. One such study was a large-scale survey of the behavioral and emotional adjustment of adolescents (Sharma et al., 1996a). The surveys were completed in schools in 350 communities in 35 different states. Over 170,000 students in grades 6 through 12 were surveyed, of which 4,682 claimed through self-report to be adopted. The mean age of adopted respondents was 14.9 years. Although this study was a large, non-clinical sample and attempted to control for race and gender, there was still the problem of the lack of differentiation between types of adoptions. It was also a relatively homogeneous sample. Of the adopted respondents 81% were Caucasian, 5% American Indian, 6% Asian American, 6% African American, and 2% Hispanic. The majority of respondents were from the Midwest (59%) and the South (24%). A matched control group was assembled from the remaining group of non-adopted adolescent respondents.

Respondents completed a 152-item survey, Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors (Benson, 1990). The five scales of the survey included external assets, internal assets, deficits, prosocial behavior, and at-risk indicators. Results of the analyses of variance on all but two scales were significant between the adopted and non-adopted control group. However, the effect sizes using Cohen's criteria were almost all below .20, which are considered small effect sizes (with the exception of illicit drug use and negative emotionality, which were both still low at .26). The only scale for which adoptees scored significantly higher than non-adoptees was prosocial behaviors, with an effect size of .17.

It is interesting to note that on comparisons within race, the category of Asian American showed no significant between group differences on any of the comparisons. This



contradicted the results of a similar study by Miller, Fan, Christensen, Grotevant, and van Dulmen (2000), which showed much more substance abuse among Asian adoptees than non-adoptees (with effect sizes of between .51 and .69).

Sharma and colleagues also controlled for age at adoption (1996b). Results indicated that as age at adoption increased, overall adoptee adjustment decreased. Those respondents adopted as infants were the closest to the control group and the oldest group (older than 10 years at age of adoption) varied the most from the control group. The differences between adoptees and non-adoptees were strongly moderated by age at adoption. “As age at adoption increases, emotional and behavioral adjustment of adoptees decreases” (1996b, p. 106). However, the investigators reported that as age at adoption increased, the control group of non-adoptees might have been inappropriate as a fair comparison because of confounding factors that might be present for a child adopted over the age of 5.

The previously mentioned study by Miller et al. (2000) was also based on a large-scale national school survey (the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health). Unlike Sharma’s study, they were able to control the adopted respondents to exclude those who were adopted by a stepparent, but were still unable to determine age at adoption. This sample included 1,587 adopted adolescents with a mean age of 15.32 years, coming from a total of 87,165 surveys. This sample was more racially diverse than Sharma’s sample (44% White, non-Hispanic, 16% Black, non-Hispanic, 8% Asian, non-Hispanic, 5% Native American, non-Hispanic, 14% Hispanic, and 7% Other).

The results indicated that adopted adolescents were at higher risk than non-adopted peers in many areas, including school achievement, school problems, substance abuse, psychological well being, lying and fighting with parents, and physical health. Miller and

colleagues conclude that, “The vast majority of adopted adolescents is well within the normal range of functioning. However, the empirical findings . . . document that adoptees have more problems than their peers, and the results are remarkably consistent across the positive and negative outcome variables examined” (2000, p. 1471).

These results should be considered with the understanding that age at adoption was not analyzed in this study. In the researchers’ own words, not being able to analyze age at adoption was an “especially salient omission” (Miller et al., 2000, p. 1472). It is an even more salient omission in light of the results of Sharma et al. (1996a, 1996b), indicating that as age at adoption increased, behavioral and emotional differences between groups also increased.

This section discussed the research on characteristics of adoptees in the US including mental health, social, and emotional adjustment. Researchers found a higher representation of adopted children in clinical populations than in the overall population (Grotevant, 1997), but little difference between adopted and non-adopted groups of infants and toddlers (Brodzinsky, 1987). Studies with samples of adoptees who were older did indicate an increase in psychological issues, school related problems, and lower social competence as they aged (Brodzinsky et al., 1984; Brodzinsky et al., 1986). Research studies on adolescent adoptees were reviewed. These studies yielded conflicting results, and methodological considerations were noted. Next, research on adoptive identity development will be presented.

### **Identity Development and Self-concept of Adoptees**

The topic of identity development is decades old; identity development for adopted persons specifically is a more recent area of inquiry. Fortunately, there has been a sizeable

amount of theoretical and empirical work done over the past 15 years on the concept of adoptive identity. Much of this work has been the result of a large scale, longitudinal study called the Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project. Although this project involved participant families whose children were domestically adopted during the first year of life and were same-race adoptions, it was a seminal study that was longitudinal and quite comprehensive. Thus, the theoretical implications are relevant to the current study and will be discussed here. One should bear in mind, however, that the following research was based on same-race, domestic adoptions of infants, not on international or interracial adoptions.

### **Adoptive Identity Development**

The work of Grotevant and his colleagues is rooted in Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory. According to Grotevant (1997), adoptive identity development is concerned with "how the individual constructs meaning about his/her adoption" (Grotevant et al., 2000, p. 381). It is a lifelong process that should be considered within historical and contextual situations, and is particularly relevant during adolescence. "The identity process becomes increasingly complex as layers of "differentness" are added; thus, this process is typically more complex for adopted than for non-adopted persons. . . .[but] this does not imply that there is anything pathological about it" (Grotevant, 1997, p. 4).

As more dimensions of "differentness" are added—such as ethnicity, culture, physical characteristics, family structure, disabilities, childhood abuse or neglect—the more challenging the process of identity development will become. For international and interracial adoptees, there are numerous dimensions of differentness to be reckoned with. They not only have to develop a sense of adoptive identity, but a sense of racial and cultural identity, as well. Grotevant and Von Korff (2011) identify some of the specific identity

concerns of international adoptees. First, they may often look different from others around them. Second, they may have difficulty connecting with members of their race because of language barriers and cultural differences. There may be ethical issues from the policies in their home country. Finally, they are often faced with a more complicated birthfamily search process.

There are two different domains of identity—those that are chosen and those that are assigned (Grotevant, 1997; Grotevant & Von Korff, 2011). Adoption is considered to be an assigned domain because a child has no choice over whether he or she is adopted. Gender, race, family structure, physical characteristics, disabilities, and childhood circumstances are other examples of assigned domains. Adoptees have very little control over any of these added dimensions of differentness, so they must be integrated into the adoptee's identity in spite of the fact that they did not choose the existence of those circumstances.

Grotevant et al. (2000) formulated three components of adoptive identity. The first is the intrapsychic component. Based in part on Erikson's (1968) theory, this component seeks to explain the cognitive and affective processes during adoptive identity development. At this level, the adoptee must come to terms with who he or she is in the contexts of family and culture. The second is the component of relational contexts within the family. Families have different degrees of openness about adoption, whether it is in regard to birthfamily contacts, discussions about adoption, or recognition of differences. The adoptee's identity development can be influenced by how these issues are dealt with in the adoptive family, particularly as the child progresses through adolescence. The third component is the interaction with contacts outside the family, which is especially relevant for adolescent interracial and international adoptees. The definitions of others, responses of community

members, and actions of peers all affect the development of adoptive identity. The component of community can also change when the child grows and moves into different environmental contexts. These components emphasize the need for considering Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as one of the bases for the current research.

A more recent contribution of the works of Grotevant and colleagues is the representation of four different patterns (or levels) of adoptive identity development in adolescents (Dunbar & Grotevant, 2004; Grotevant, 2003). They are described as follows:

- Unexamined—those adolescents who had not aggressively pursued what adoption means to them; little positive or negative affect was demonstrated; and adoption was not a significant issue for them.
- Limited—those adolescents who have done some exploration of adoption, but claim that it was not very important to them; they viewed adoption positively, but downplayed the differences of adoptive families from non-adoptive.
- Unsettled—those adolescents who had thought a lot about adoption in their lives and, as a result, often experienced negative feelings associated with it.
- Integrated—those adolescents who had also thought a lot about adoption in their lives, but had moved into more coherent, positive acceptance of what being adopted meant for them.

To summarize, adoptive identity development is a lifelong process that can become more complex as more dimensions of “differentness” are added to a person's image.

Adoption is an assigned domain of identity over which the child has no choice, and thus, may make identity development more difficult. Adoptive identity consists of three components:

the intrapsychic, relations within the family, and interactions with contacts outside the family. These components support the need for an underlying ecological systems theory that considers the contexts within which development occurs. Finally, there are four levels of adoptive identity development: unexamined, limited, unsettled, and integrated. These levels informed the analysis of identity development of participants for the current research project.

### **Racial/Ethnic Identity Development**

Much of the research conducted on adoption has dealt with three main issues—behavioral and psychological outcomes, adoptive identity development, and racial/ethnic identity development (Lee, 2003). The research on the first two topics has focused mostly on domestic infant adoptees, and have already been addressed. The discussion turns now to research on the racial and ethnic identity development of interracial adoptees (which often pertained to Black children adopted by White parents) and international adoptees (who are also interracial).

As a specific group of adoptees, interracial/international adoptees experience a unique phenomenon in that they are most often (a) raised in a culture that is quite different from the culture experienced by their own racial group, and (b) raised by parents who are of a different race than their own (Steward & Baden, 1995). To distinguish race from culture, Steward and Baden aptly described that “individuals of the same race may be from different cultures; and, in contrast, individuals of different races may share cultures” (1995, p. 9). These incongruities exist for many interracial/international adoptees. Lee (2003) has coined a phenomenon called the “transracial adoption paradox” that has often been cited in the literature. Lee elucidates it as follows: “[transracial] adoptees are racial/ethnic minorities in society, but they are perceived and treated by others, and sometimes themselves, as if they

are members of the majority culture (i.e., racially White and ethnically European) due to adoption into a White family” (2003, p. 711). This can lead to a conflict in the adoptee’s sense of racial and cultural identity. The adoptee needs to identify and come to terms with all of the divergent racial and cultural forces at work in his or her life.

One leading researcher in the area of ethnic identity compiled a meta-analysis of 70 empirical studies pertaining to the ethnic identity development of adolescents and adults (Phinney, 1990). It is noted that the articles reviewed in this meta-analysis were mostly studies with Blacks, and White ethnic minorities such as Italians, Greeks, and Jews. The studies were conducted in many different countries. Very few of them were studies with Asians, and none were pertaining to adoptees. Notwithstanding, Phinney’s work was seminal in the field of racial/ethnic identity development, and worthy of mention.

As a result of her meta-analysis, Phinney (1990) highlighted some important limitations in the early research in this field. Phinney found that the research efforts in this area were quite fragmented. Numerous definitions of ethnic identity were provided, if a definition was provided at all. Much of the research focused on young children—very few dealt with adolescents or adults. Finally, about one-fourth of the studies provided no sound theoretical basis, and many utilized instruments that were unreliable.

In spite of the limitations, Phinney did glean some important themes. There was evidence to suggest that a strong racial identity did not always coincide with a strong ethnic identity. This is a finding that is important to bear in mind when considering the racial and ethnic identity development of interracial/international adoptees. There was also evidence to suggest that ethnic identity is not necessarily a linear construct, but more of a cyclical one and one that may need to be conceptualized qualitatively in different ways relating to one’s

own group. This also lends support to the use of ecological systems theory in this qualitative study.

Lee (2003) continued where Phinney's work left off, specifically because he consolidated much of the research on ethnic identity development for interracial adoptees in a meta-analysis of over 20 studies from 1990 to 2003. He found similar limitations in the research as did Phinney. They included:

- Lack of reliable and valid measurements for racial and ethnic identity, as well as for cultural socialization
- Lack of sound and consistent theoretical bases
- Poor sampling procedures with reliance on small, convenience samples
- Poor use of comparison groups
- High attrition amongst longitudinal studies
- A lack of the perspective of the adoptees

These limitations support the need for qualitative studies with adolescent adoptees as the principal informants, and studies with a strong basis in theory that do not rely upon measuring instruments or quantitative methods of analysis.

**Black Adoptees.** One of the most comprehensive longitudinal studies on interracial adoption began in 1971 and continued over the next 20 years with 3 additional follow-up studies (Simon & Alstein, 2002; Simon, Alstein, & Melli, 1994). The purpose of the study was to analyze the effects of interracial adoption on Black children adopted by White parents. The original sample consisted of 204 families with 366 interracially adopted children between 4 and 8 years old. The first follow up was in 1979 with 133 of the original families via telephone interviews or mail surveys. The second follow up was in 1984, when



they conducted personal interviews with both the adults and children. The study culminated in 1991 with 76 of the original families when the adoptees were in their 20s. This final group accounted for 37% of the initial sample.

The third phase of the study revealed that some adoptees were experiencing problems with stealing, running away, skipping school, and drinking and drug problems. Interestingly, these same patterns of behavior seemed to be exhibited by biological children within the same families, as well, indicating they were related more to family dynamics than adoptive status. Fortunately, most of those delinquent behaviors had ceased by the final phase of the interviews when the adoptees were young adults (Simon & Alstein, 2002).

Simon and Alstein's 2002 results conflict with those of another study of 240 children in 91 adoptive families—originally from the Minnesota Transracial Adoption Study (Weinberg, Waldman, van Dulmen, & Scarr, 2004). This study explored differences in psychosocial adjustment among groups of interracial adoptees, Caucasian adoptees, and their non-adopted siblings during late adolescence and early adulthood. Even though it was found that the children in these interracial families did not show evidence of poor adjustment, the non-adopted children were considered the least likely to be seen by their parents as having any adjustment problems at all.

Simon & Alstein (2002) also reported that the adoptees were aware of and comfortable with their racial identities both as adolescents and young adults. The results of a self-esteem questionnaire revealed no significant differences in self-esteem of black interracial adoptees, their non-adopted siblings, and other interracial adoptees. McRoy and Zurcher (1983) also found no differences between the self-esteem of *interracially* adopted Black children as compared to a group of *intragracially* adopted Black children. As a result of

their research, they did conclude that interracially adopted Black children had more positive feelings about being Black if they lived in more integrated communities, attended more integrated schools, and their parents supported their Black racial identity. This is a result that has been consistent throughout the research.

**Asian and Latino Adoptees.** Feigelman and Silverman surveyed a sample of 713 families in 1975 with adopted Black, Korean, Vietnamese, Columbian, and White children. A follow up survey was sent in 1981. Their research attempted to compare the results of research with Black interracial adoptees with Asian and Latino interracial adoptees. The results suggested that most African American, Asian, and Latin American adoptees adapted fairly well. For those adoptees that did exhibit behavioral or emotional problems, it was determined that “delays in placement and problems in the pre-adoptive environment seemed most closely linked to later adjustment problems” (Silverman & Feigelman, 1990, p. 198).

This section first reviewed Phinney’s (1990) seminal research on the racial/ethnic identity development of adoptees. Next, studies on the racial/ethnic identity development of interracial and international adoptees (in particular those who were African American, Asian, and Latino) found that they adjusted equivalently to their non-adopted peers by young adulthood. A discussion of the research on Asian international adoptees is presented next, beginning with Korean adoptees, and then CAs.

### **Research Pertaining to Asian International Adoptees**

#### **Korean Adoptees**

Given the 50-year history of Korean adoption, there is an abundance of research pertaining to Korean adoptees at different stages of growth and development. As a precursor to detailing the research on CAs, a discussion of applicable research on Korean adoptees is

provided first. The experiences of this cohort provide significant insights for future generations of internationally adopted children, particularly those that are also from Asian countries.

**The effects of fostering cultural/ethnic socialization.** There is overwhelming evidence in the literature that emphasizes the importance of parents' efforts to foster ethnic pride and ethnic identity development in their internationally adopted children. Korean adoptees that possess stronger ethnic pride and identity have been shown to have better psychosocial and psychological adjustment and overall well-being (Basow, Lilley, Bookwala, & McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 2008; Silverman & Feigelman, 1990; Tessler et al., 1999; Yoon, 2004). Some of the more recent studies conducted with adult Korean adoptees are discussed here.

One recent study (Yoon, 2004) attempted to determine whether adopted children who received more parental support for ethnic socialization have greater collective self-esteem, and as a result possess greater levels of positive well-being and lower levels of distress. From a list of over 800 names, 241 families (Korean adoptees and parents) volunteered for the study. Adoptee participants were between 12 and 19 years old, with a mean age of 14.2. The parents were mostly White (96%), and more than three-fourths of the families reported living in predominantly White communities.

The study utilized Barner's Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (1982) to measure aspects of warmth in parent-child relationships; the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale by Rohner (1986) to measure openness and problems in family communication; the Adoptive Parental Support of Adoptee's Ethnic Socialization Scale to measure adoptive parental support; and The Collective Self-Esteem Scale, to measure pride

and shame about ethnic origin (the latter two developed by Yoon, 2004). Yoon's two instruments yielded strong results of internal consistency and reliability of .85, which is considered good for an affective instrument. The sample size of 241 was sufficient to validate these instruments since the number of items both the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (with 4 items) and the Parental Support of Adoptee's Ethnic Socialization scale (with 8 items) were quite small.

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed. Results indicated that adoptees with higher levels of collective self-esteem were more likely to have grown up in racially diverse communities ( $\beta = .27, p < .001$ ) and received parental support for their ethnic socialization ( $\beta = .26, p < .001$ ). Yoon concluded that (a) parents who supported their children's ethnic socialization tend to have children with more positive feelings about their ethnic heritage, (b) adoptees living in more racially diverse communities had higher collective self-esteem, (c) having Korean siblings lessened emotional and psychological distress, and (d) families that are warm and communicate well are a primary source of the adoptee's subjective well-being.

Yoon's results concurred with the results of another recent study by Basow, Lilley, Bookwala, and McGillicuddy-DeLisi (2008). Its purpose was to determine whether ethnic identity and adjustment to adoption predict psychological well-being. The researchers predicted that (a) cultural socialization experiences would be related to better psychological adjustment, (b) stronger ethnic identity would be related to better psychological well-being, and (c) more positive adjustment to adoption would be related to psychological well-being. This was an internet-based quantitative study with 83 self-selected Korean adoptees between

18 and 37 years old, with a mean age of 23. Participants were recruited through various online sources and snowball sampling.

The study utilized three scales of Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (1989), including the Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, and Self-Acceptance scales; Phinney's Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (1992) to measure ethnic identity; the Emotional Reaction Scale by Brown (2007), to measure positive and negative emotions in relation to their feelings about adoption; Smith's Adoption Loss Scale (1994) to measure perceptions of adoption-related loss; and Ramirez's Multicultural Experience Inventory (1999) to measure cultural socialization. All the instruments yielded good measures of internal consistency of .80 or higher, except the Adoption Loss Scale, which yielded an acceptable, albeit lower, internal consistency of .70.

Bivariate correlations were conducted on the data. Results were consistent with the hypothesized predictions. "Higher scores for positive emotions about adoption were related to less adoption-related loss or more favorable perceptions about being adopted,  $r(81) = .51$ ,  $p < .01$ , and with two subscales of psychological well-being: higher scores on positive relationships with others,  $r(81) = .32$ ,  $p < .01$ , and self-acceptance,  $r(81) = .37$ ,  $p < .01$ " (Basow et al., 2008, p. 476). Scores of stronger ethnic identity were positively associated with having more multicultural experiences ( $r(81) = .29$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Interestingly, older age at adoption was negatively correlated with lower self-acceptance ( $r(81) = -.30$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Another intriguing result was that adoptees who had searched for birth families scored higher in ethnic identity than those who did not conduct a search ( $r(81) = -.35$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This might indicate that those individuals who felt more connected with Korean culture were more willing or more confident with themselves ethnically to initiate a search for their roots. In

this researcher's opinion, the desire to search for one's birthfamily is perceived as a positive outcome for this population because it is a sign of a healthy identity.

Basow and colleagues' conclusions were consistent with those of Tessler et al. (1999), that a strong ethnic identity is an important part of psychological well-being. Urban living was positively correlated with higher cultural socialization ( $p < .05$ ), concurring with Yoon (2004), which implies that residing in more diverse neighborhoods might increase levels of cultural socialization for international adoptees. Overall, "higher levels of ethnic identity and a more positive adjustment to adoption were associated with greater psychological well-being in adult Korean American adoptees" (Basow et al., 2008, p. 479).

It should be mentioned that Basow and colleagues' (2008) study was conducted with self-selected volunteering families whose perspectives might be more positive than those who were not willing to volunteer to participate in such a study. Participants were also recruited online and were required to participate by completing online surveys, which might have also excluded a certain demographic of possible participants who did not have access to computers. Unfortunately, these are common concerns among studies with this population, in general.

It appears from the aforementioned studies that parents of international adoptees can support their children in the long run by exposing them to various cultural socialization experiences, whether they live in urban areas or not. It should be mentioned that exposure to cultural experiences from any diverse culture can be beneficial, not just exposure to the child's own ethnic culture (Basow et al., 2008; Yoon, 2004). According to Lee (2006), it does appear that families of more recent international adoptees (Chinese adoptive parents

included) have heeded this advice and have made concerted efforts to provide their children with diverse opportunities.

**Areas of concern for Korean adoptees.** A qualitative study in 2010 was done for the purpose of exploring adult Korean adoptees' experiences with racial derogation in their youth, and the extent to which they avoided discussing those events with their White parents (Docan-Morgan, 2010). This was an interview study with 34 participants between the ages of 18 and 40 ( $\mu = 26$ ,  $\sigma = 6.57$ ). Most of the interviews were conducted in person ( $n = 23$ ) and the remaining were completed via online surveys which contained identical questions as the interviews ( $n = 11$ ). Through Owen's (1984, 1985) thematic analysis method, it was concluded that participants experienced a variety of racially derogatory messages and attacks in their youth, and that they often avoided discussing those events with their parents. Participants apparently avoided those discussions because of parent unresponsiveness and a desire to protect themselves. It would have been interesting if Docan-Morgan had also interviewed the parents in this study to compare the two viewpoints of parents and children.

The experiences of Korean adoptees are diverse and unique. Being adopted and ethnically different from most individuals around you can complicate the development of identity and self-concept. They can consider themselves (and be viewed by others) as Korean, American, Korean-American, or another variation. They may be perceived by others as immigrants or minorities, or by those who know them well, perhaps even Caucasian, as has been a common theme in the literature. They often feel like outsiders in both Korean and home communities—as if they are between two different worlds with one foot in each. Ramsey and Mika (2011) expressed this beautifully in the following poetic analogy:

It is as though they are standing on stepping stones in a river—drawn toward both banks but also caught in the middle of the stream. Sometimes they are on a sturdy rock that enables them to leap easily to the next one, but at other times the rock wobbles, and they lose their balance. As they move from shore to shore, they select and discard elements of their identities. Over time, they hopefully will weave together experiences, insights, and connections to create bridges so that they are able to easily and smoothly move between the shores. (Ramsey & Mika, 2011, p. 621)

Park (2011) conducted an in-depth qualitative study in which she concluded that Korean adoptees' identities were anchored in what she called "out-of-place subjectivity" and that "adoptee identity is a product of complex process, emerging over the life course, rather than a static category" (p. iii). It was determined from this ethnographic study that there were three distinct generations of Korean adoptees, each with their own unique set of experiences based upon the social milieus within which they grew up. This highlighted the importance of similar continued research for CAs and other cohorts of adoptees. Another important finding of Park's study was that adoptees often facilitated a kinship with other Korean adoptees, and found those relationships to be beneficial to their development of identity.

### **Chinese Adoptees**

As mentioned previously, the research pertaining to CAs has been quite limited. The majority of current research pertaining to CAs is descriptive in nature, primarily resulting from large-scale survey research. In nearly all cases, participants for studies on CAs have been self-selected volunteers. Since adoption agencies are ethically responsible for maintaining the privacy of adoptees and their families, there are no public directories



available. Researchers are, therefore, limited to recruiting participants on a voluntary basis. Much of the data were obtained through parent report, since CAs have been too young to participate (Cohen & Farnia, 2010; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tan & Baggerly, 2009; Tan & Camras, 2011; Tan, Dedrick, & Marfo, 2007; Tan & Nakkula, 2004; Tessler et al., 1999; Tu, 2001). Those studies that did include the responses of the adoptees involved those who were pre-adolescents or younger (Adams et al., 2005; Cao & Pitman, 2008; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tan, 2004b; Tessler et al., 2009; Tong, 2005; Tu, 2001). There are only a few studies involving the responses of the CAs themselves which focused on the home, school, and community environments (Cao & Pitman, 2008; Tessler et al., 2009; Tong, 2005).

This review of the literature highlighted a definite need for continued research that employs the personal perspectives of CAs in late adolescence and early adulthood. As the first cohort of CAs approach young adulthood, the time is ripe for reporting the experiences of the adoptees from their own perspectives, rather than from the perspectives of others. A discussion of the major results from studies with CAs follows, beginning with survey studies that provided a wealth of demographic information pertaining to this population. This is followed by a review of other research on CAs by topic.

**Family adjustments.** Two large scale empirical studies of families with children adopted from China were conducted by Tessler and colleagues from 1999 to 2009, and Rojewski and Rojewski from 1999 to 2000. These studies were the first to deal specifically with international adoption from China. The results obtained from both studies were beneficial, considering the limited body of research in this area. They provided important

descriptive data that had not been previously available regarding families with CAs from most parts of the United States. They are discussed in detail here.

Beginning in 1996, Tessler and colleagues conducted what was considered “the first major study conducted . . . on adoption of children from China” (Hoshmand et al., 2006, p. 19). It was a longitudinal study conducted in three phases; an empirical investigation of how parents recognize and encourage the bicultural needs of their children.

In 1996 the first phase began with an internet survey of 526 parents, representing 361 families, and 391 CAs. The sample represented families from 38 states and Canada, with children ranging in age from 6 months to 7 years. The survey analysis resulted in demographics pertaining to the families of CAs from around the country and parents’ perspectives regarding the bi-cultural identity development in their children (Tessler et al., 1999).

The second phase of the study was conducted in 2001 and 2002, with a sample of parents representing 266 of the original 391 children, whose average age was now 7 years. In addition to the parent questionnaire, the research team collected data regarding school diversity of the 266 public and private schools represented, and projective tests of social desirability characteristics completed by each CA. Interestingly, the results did not support the hypothesis that school diversity would encourage the development of ethnic identity in CAs. “To the contrary, children attending schools with greater diversity were less likely to show a Chinese preference, and more likely to show a White preference” (Adams et al., 2005, p. 26).

The final phase of the study was conducted by Tessler, Gamache, and Adams in 2008 with questionnaires sent to 308 parents and 291 youths whose average age was 13.3 years.

This final phase of the study was the only one to consider the personal perspectives of the CAs.

As mentioned previously, Rojewski and Rojewski (2001) conducted another large-scale survey study pertaining to CAs from 1999 to 2000. This was also an internet survey study. It was an empirical investigation of how parents recognize the cultural development and needs of their Chinese adopted children. Surveys were conducted with 339 families from 45 states in the United States and Canada. This study included follow-up interviews with selected respondents via telephone or email. Overall, 339 CAs with a median age of 3.1 years were represented. Portions of the survey included a section on attitudes toward adoption and a section on cultural perspectives, which both included qualitative, open-ended response items.

In addition, the Rojewski's conducted a meta-analysis of past research on international adoptees from other countries, and presented the results of their survey in context of the meta-analysis. Overall, they found from the research that the adjustment and development of past groups of intercountry adoptees was positive and made a positive prognosis for CAs going forward. They went on to say that the long-term adjustment and development of CAs is yet to be determined, since the population was still quite young. One of the recommendations for future research within the interpretive paradigm was determining how CAs perceive their lives at different stages of development—during childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood. This is one of the goals of the present study.

From the first phase of Tessler and colleagues longitudinal study when the children were an average age of 3 years, it was concluded that CAs were adjusting as well as their non-adopted peers (Tessler et al., 1999). Similarly, Rojewski and Rojewski (2001) cited a

positive overall adjustment and early development of CAs who were an average age of 3.1 years. There have been several other quantitative and qualitative investigations with CAs conducted over the past decade. The results of these investigations are largely consistent with those of Rojewski and Rojewski and Tessler and colleagues. Those remaining studies will be discussed next by topic, beginning with mental health and psychological adjustment.

**Mental health and psychological adjustment.** In 2004, Tan began significant quantitative research on CAs with his doctoral dissertation. Using the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) by Achenbach and Rescorla (2000, 2001), Tan compared the adjustment of CAs to the instrument's normative sample. Results indicated that CAs had better adjustment than the U.S. normative sample on the CBCL. This was consistent even when the results of the CAs who were from single-parent homes were compared with those from dual-parent homes (Tan, 2004a). Another quantitative dissertation (Norris, 2006) compared 5-year-old CAs against a matched sample of non-adopted 5-year-olds on neuropsychological development, social skills, and behavior and emotion regulation (Norris, 2006). Using the parent and teacher report forms of the CBCL and Social Skills Rating System by Gresham and Elliot (1990), the results of several MANOVAs and Chi-Square analyses indicated no significant differences were found between 5-year-old CAs and non-adopted 5-year-olds for all hypotheses tested. In a subsequent study, the CBCL for 6- to 18-year-olds was completed by parents of 516 CAs with a mean age of 8.2 years (Dedrick, Tan, & Marfo, 2008). Results of confirmatory factor analysis again revealed mostly small differences between the CAs and normative samples.

**Identity development.** Much of the research on CAs focused on ethnic/racial identity development. Using a multiple case study qualitative dissertation with four young

CAs between 3.5 and 7.5 years old, Tu (2001) sought to examine how Chinese adopted children created their self-identities using direct observations of the children, interviews with parents, and artifact analysis. Three of the children attended Chinese language school and one did not. The researcher found that all four participant children exhibited positive perspectives regarding their Chinese heritage. The positive results were attributed largely to the parents' efforts to expose the children to Chinese culture and language opportunities. They were thus able to develop a strong bicultural identity, at least in their middle childhood years. Tu recommended that further research on the self-identity of CAs as they progress through the different stages of development.

A 16-month longitudinal ethnographic study in 2003-2004 utilized observations, interviews, and home visits to investigate how CAs form their identity by observing interactions between home, school, and community environments (Cao & Pitman, 2008). They performed this research because there were “virtually no studies” (2008, p. 62) of this kind dealing with the effects of different environments on the adoptee. Participants represented 13 families, consisting of 23 CAs between the ages of 11 months and 13 years, and 22 parents between the ages of 34 and 59 years. All were from cities in the Midwestern part of the country.

Cao and Pitman found that many of the participants were “caught between the notion of being Chinese and being American” (2008, p. 79), particularly in school and the community. Many of the children experienced racism. Teachers, school personnel, and parents were often unable to adequately address the dilemmas these children experienced. The more hidden forms of racism experienced were often interpreted by the parents as normal peer conflicts or a form of bullying, rather than as racism. All but one of the

participants expressed wanting to be White—they felt ostracized by their peers for being Chinese. This study highlights the importance of continuing to conduct research with CAs in the contexts of school and the community. The results are also strikingly similar to some of the more recent work regarding the experiences of Korean adoptees (Docan-Morgan, 2010; Ramsey & Mika, 2011). Cao and Pitman also found that connections with their “China sisters” was a crucial component of the CAs identity development. “Observations further confirmed that children who had frequent contact with their China sisters . . . tended to be more comfortable in social settings and to hold a more positive image about the Chinese part of their identity” (2008, p. 81).

Tan and Nakkula (2004) conducted an ethnographic study of 10 families with CAs from one Northeastern state. This study was done to determine parents’ views of their daughters’ ethnic identity; therefore, it was based solely on the views and responses of the parents and not the children. Tan and Nakkula did conclude that further research was warranted on how the CAs perceived their own identity, which was one of the goals of the present study.

Another qualitative investigation (Tong, 2005) was a phenomenological dissertation to determine how CAs interact within peer groups, school environments, and community institutions. The researcher conducted focus groups and interviews with 32 parents and 20 children between 9 and 12 years old. Tong concluded that the participants possessed a positive sense of self-identity and that the search for identity and connection with China is a lifelong process. A theme among the sample was “having one foot in two worlds forever” (2005, p. 312). Tong recommended future research be done with CAs during adolescence

which looks at identity development over time, which is one of the research questions of the current study.

The second phase of Tessler and colleagues longitudinal study (Adams et al., 2005) concluded that school diversity did not encourage the development of ethnic identity and Chinese pride in CAs. This directly conflicted with the results of numerous other related studies regarding ethnic socialization of CAs and other interracial adoptees, including the results of the follow-up to this study in 2009 (Cao & Pitman, 2008; McRoy & Zurcher, 1983; Simon & Alstein, 2002; Tessler et al., 2009). The results of the follow-up study in 2009 (Tessler et al., 2009) indicated that Chinese ethnicity was important to the CAs as part of their adolescent identity. It was also found that those parents who emphasized the importance of their child's bicultural socialization growing up had a positive predictive effect on their adolescent's ethnic identity ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ), and that peer contact with other CAs correlated with positive ethnic identity ( $r = .22, p < .001$ ).

**Social and emotional adjustment.** Research pertaining to social and emotional adjustment outcomes of CAs focused on the different environments of home, school, and community. Tong's phenomenological study (2005) concluded that CAs had developed firm emotional attachments and bonded well with their families. A more recent study by Tan and Camras (2011) attempted to determine the social skills of CAs at home and in school. A total of 869 Parents and 611 (out of 869) teachers from preschool through the secondary level completed Gresham and Elliot's (1990) Social Skills Rating System (SSRS). Results indicated that CAs scored similarly to or higher than the U.S. normative sample. On 10 out of 15 parental ratings and 11 out of 14 teacher ratings, the CAs outperformed the normative sample. Parent-teacher correlations concluded that agreements were modest, yet significant

( $r = .12$  to  $.25$ ,  $p < 0.05$  to  $p < 0.001$ ). In conclusion, Tan and Camras stated that “qualitative data might offer further insights in how parents and teachers perceive the adopted Chinese girls’ social behaviors” (2011, p. 1819). Thus, one of the quests of the current study is to investigate how the perspectives of the CAs compare to those of their parents and educators.

The research is conflicted as to whether or not parents and teachers are responsive to the needs of CAs. Tan and Nakkula (2004) concluded that the parents in their study advocated well for sensitivity to the needs of their children in the schools. However, their research was based on parental responses only. The current study attempted to obtain the perspectives of not only the parents, but the adoptees and teachers, as well. Cao and Pitman (2008) reported that many of the CAs in their study experienced racism, and that their parents and teachers were unable to adequately address these issues for them.

Very little research was available regarding the community and social adjustment of CAs. Tan and Nakkula (2004) did, however, conclude that parents maintained social support networks and “surrogate agencies” to fill in the gaps for their children. The parents also reported the desire to learn about China and Chinese culture themselves, a phenomenon they called “Chinesenization” (2004, p. 64). It should be noted, however, that this study was based upon parental reports only of children who were still quite young (between 2 and 9 years old). It was stated “that parents’ expectations for their daughters’ ethnic identity might not be consistent with how the adoptees view themselves” (Tan & Nakkula, 2004, p. 74).

**Age at adoption.** A common theme noted in the literature was the effect of age at adoption on the social and emotional adjustment of CAs. Tan (2004a) found that neglect during infancy negatively correlated with all aspects of social competence during middle childhood, particularly in school performance and extra-curricular activities.



Norris (2006) conducted a study with 25 CAs (*M* age of 65.8 months) and their mothers, to determine the effects of early institutionalization on neuropsychological functioning, social competence, and emotional and behavioral regulation. Norris utilized Achenbach's (2001) Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), Gresham and Elliot's (1990) Social Skills Rating Scale (SSRS). Both instruments were parent report measures. Significant positive correlations were found between age at adoption and the Total Problems scale ( $r^2 = .428, p < .05$ ) and Aggressive Behavior scale ( $r^2 = .437, p < .05$ ) on the CBCL. Significant positive correlations were also found between age at adoption and the Problem Behaviors scale ( $r^2 = .486, p < .05$ ) and Externalizing Behaviors scale ( $r^2 = .434, p < .05$ ) on the SSRS. The results indicated more parental concerns with social and emotional behaviors in CAs adopted at a later age. Norris also utilized the Emotion Knowledge Computer Test, which included two tasks—the Emotion Situation Task and the Expression Identification Task (Norris, 2001, p.34). Results indicated negative correlations between age at adoption and Emotion Situation Accuracy ( $r^2 = -.5, p < .05$ ) and Expression Identification tasks ( $r^2 = -.507, p < .05$ ), indicating less ability to correctly match facial expressions with emotional situations and labels for children adopted at a later age. These results seem to concur with Tan's (2004) results just discussed where pre-adoption neglect was predictive of later adjustment problems. It seems logical that the longer the amount of time spent prior to adoption in orphanages and/or foster care, the more opportunity there might be for neglect and thus later attachment issues.

**Resilience.** Another common theme in the literature on CAs was that of resilience (Cao & Pitman, 2008; Dedrick et al., 2008; Tong, 2005). Researchers from the China Adoption Research Project (Tan, Marfo, & Dedrick, 2010) suggest that CAs have equal or

slightly better behavioral adjustment as compared to non-adopted age mates. They offer three possible reasons for this pattern of resilience. The first is that “China’s child welfare institutions appear to offer better child rearing environments” (2010, p. 312) than those in countries such as Romania and Russia. Another is that Chinese children exhibit fewer incidences of prenatal exposure to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco than children from other countries. The third explanation is that Chinese (and other Asian) children have more favorable outcomes than other international adoptees because of “easier temperaments” (2010, p. 313) indicating more ability to be resilient to adverse environmental and physical conditions.

**Summary.** Although research on CAs in particular has been scant, the results have been quite compelling. Tan (2006) reported that CAs’ “language acquisition, social and emotional adjustment, and later academic performance have all been reported as either similar to or more favorable than their non-adopted peers” (p. 17). Tan does state, however, that their long-term adjustment outcomes as adults are still unknown. This is one of the goals of the present study. Ongoing research with CAs as a subgroup of international adoptees will continue to be necessary as they grow through the different stages of development.

The studies just discussed concur with Rojewski and Rojewski’s 2001 research and meta-analysis which predicted a positive outlook for CAs in comparison to their non-adopted peers. These results also coincide with Simon, Alstein, and Melli’s 20-year longitudinal study of transracial adoptees discussed previously. In addition, they provide results that could be used to predict problems that CAs might have as they grow up, based upon situations that existed in their pre-adoptive histories. However, rather than focusing on predicting problems, the current research study focused on finding out if and why CAs have

adapted well in the contexts of family, school, and community. By searching for areas of resilience, the results can hopefully be used to improve upon the experiences of future international and interracial adoptees.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight from young adult Chinese adoptees (CAs) who were at an age which they can personally reflect upon their own experiences.

The researcher comes from a post-positivist perspective, in which an individuals' social reality is a construct uniquely defined by each person (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

“Researchers who use this approach are interested in how different people make sense of their lives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 7). This stance necessitated first-person accounts of the experience of growing up as a CA.

This study involved a sample of 11 female adolescent and young adult CAs, ranging in age from 16 to 20 years. One parent and one educator of each adoptee were also interviewed. The focus was the development of identity, the experiences of academic life, and the quality of family, peer, social, and community relationships. A multi-case study design was selected in order to “gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). According to Merriam, case study research focuses more on process and content than on variables and outcomes, as in quantitative experiments.

This chapter includes a discussion of the following: (a) biography of the researcher, (b) ethical precautions, (c) research questions, (d) recruitment procedures and sampling methods, (e) description of participants, (f) research design, (g) instrumentation, (h) methods of analyses, and (i) limitations of the research.

#### **Researcher Biography**

Case study research, which is included within the qualitative paradigm, calls for personal involvement and analysis on the part of the researcher. According to Gall, Gall, and

Borg (2003), the case study researcher is the primary measuring instrument in the study, and often “becomes personally involved in the phenomenon being studied” (p. 445). Yin (2003) lists five commonly required skills of the case study investigator. They include:

- being able to ask good questions, and interpret the answers;
- being a good listener;
- being adaptive and flexible, seeing situations as opportunities rather than threats;
- having a firm grasp of the issues being studied; and
- being unbiased by preconceived notions and sensitive to contradictory evidence (Yin, 2003, p. 59).

The researcher has 20 years classroom experience as a mathematics and business education teacher from the sixth grade through the college level. In addition to her classroom experience, she holds a master’s degree in school counseling, and is a nationally certified counselor. During her studies in school counseling, she received training and practice in questioning techniques, active listening, interviewing, and consultation. Given the aforementioned background, she thus possessed the skills necessary to conduct interviews of a personal and delicate nature with adolescent and young adult participants. The researcher is also the mother of two children adopted from China. She therefore has a keen awareness of, and interest in, the needs of adoptees, adoptive families, and educators alike.

The researcher was aware that she might possess personal biases that could affect the analysis of the data in this research, because she was an adoptive parent herself. Thus, she made an attempt to minimize possible bias through an in-depth review of the literature, ongoing peer consultation, reflective field notes, an analysis journal, and a dependability audit of the analyses and coding. Doctoral coursework in qualitative analysis also provided

an understanding of the need to keep biases and personal judgments aside during the research process. Above all else, the primary intent of conducting this study was to expand upon the body of knowledge in this field, not to pass judgment on the participants, their families, or educators (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The researcher was interested in telling the stories of the adoptees as accurately as possible simply because they were worthy of being told (Seidman, 1998).

### **Statement of Ethics and Confidentiality**

During the Spring of 2011, the researcher submitted a proposal of the study and obtained approval from the university Institutional Review Board (IRB). Each prospective participant received a cover letter and consent/assent forms (Appendices H through M) that described (a) the requirements of participation, including the length of the interview and forms to be completed; (b) the right to terminate their participation in the study at any time; (c) that the interviews would be audio recorded; (d) that each participant would receive a 25 dollar gift certificate as a show of appreciation for their participation; and (e) the name and contact information of a licensed counselor with a specialized certificate in clinical issues in adoption. Each participant was welcomed to contact this counselor free of charge, in the event he or she needed to debrief with a qualified professional as a result of his or her participation. Given the personal nature of the topic under study, the referral to a professional resource for all participants seemed appropriate from an ethical perspective.

All data were obtained personally by the researcher and held confidential. Each participant was assigned a coded identification number. Pseudonyms were used in all written reports to protect confidentiality. The researcher maintained the pseudonyms, identification codes, digital audio files, transcripts, completed instruments, forms, and demographic

questionnaires in a secure location. All participants received a copy of their respective interview transcripts for an opportunity to make corrections or deletions prior to analysis, as well as a copy of the final written case report prior to publication. Seidman (1998) suggested that the interviewer allow the participant access to both the raw data and the written report. “Such sharing would facilitate the participant’s ability to review the interview experience and to decide whether to ask the interviewer not to use certain parts of the material” (Seidman, 1998, p. 54).

Snowball sampling was used to obtain some participants. Snowball sampling is defined by Bogdan and Biklen (2003) as a method of sampling in which participants in a study are asked to recommend other people who might be willing to participate. In light of this, the researcher made additional efforts to minimize recognition of sensitive information by other participants. It is noted that “interviewers working with in-depth interview material, however, cannot guarantee anonymity. ...a reader who knows the participant may recognize him or her” (Seidman, 1998, p. 56). The researcher made additional efforts to personally contact participants to discuss specific concerns and allowed them the opportunity to review final written reports before they were included in the study. Actual participants’ names were withheld from all other parties involved in the research; including advisors, peer reviewers, and the auditor. For educational purposes, only the findings were accessible to professors and students enrolled in Western Connecticut State University’s Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership Program.

### **Research Questions**

The focus of this study was the development of identity, experiences of academic life, and quality of relationships of CAs between the ages of 16 and 21. The intent was to give

this oldest group of adoptees a voice to harvest personal perceptions that had not been previously available in the literature. It was hoped that the perspective of the adolescents and young adults going through this phenomenon would help to describe and illuminate the essence of their experiences. The following research questions were explored through this study:

1. How do adolescent and young adult CAs perceive their experiences in different sociological contexts: at home, with peers, at school, and in the community?
2. Retrospectively, how do CAs perceive their life experiences at different stages of development: during childhood, during adolescence, and at present?
3. How do parents view their child's family, social, and academic experiences?
4. How do educators (as defined by teachers, school counselors, coaches, and the like), who work with the CAs view their academic progress and overall adjustment?
5. How do the perspectives of the CAs compare to those of their parents and educators?

### **Recruitment Procedures, Sampling Methods, and Participants**

#### **Recruitment Procedures**

Participants for the study were recruited through various efforts. These included: (a) networking with personal contacts; (b) making professional contacts in the adoption field; and (c) posting public announcements in adoption-related newsletters, on adoption websites, and listservs. The latter occurred as a result of professional contacts and networking. Due to the personal nature of adoption, it was necessary to recruit possible participants through word-of-mouth, networking, and publicity announcements. Confidentiality laws ruled out



the possibility of obtaining a list of CAs from adoption agencies and contacting them directly. The details below describe the steps that were taken to publicize the study.

**Networking with personal contacts.** The first step taken was sending an email blast to the researcher's friends, family, and colleagues. This email described the nature of the study and requested assistance with spreading the word about the study to CAs or adoptive families they might know. A sample of the email is included in Appendix N. All emails sent for recruitment purposes included two items, a recruitment flyer that could be posted to recruit participants, and a 350-word abstract of the study (Appendices O and P, respectively). The email requested that recipients post the recruitment flyer in public buildings such as libraries, colleges, or places of work, where appropriate. Additionally, word was also spread by personally discussing the research project with contacts and acquaintances whenever possible. The above efforts resulted in obtaining three participants for the study.

**Networking with professional contacts and posting public announcements.** Several organizations were contacted to assist with publicizing the study and the call for participants. Since the age range of 16 to 21 included minors, it was difficult to solicit organizations whose membership included the adoptees directly. However, two such sources were identified. They were The National Association of Asian American Professionals, Boston (NAAAP), and One World Blog for Chinese Adoptees at [www.chineseadoptee.com](http://www.chineseadoptee.com). The former organization was unable to provide any CAs in their membership. The One World Blog did allow the researcher to post an announcement and call for participants on the blog site. Unfortunately, no volunteers were obtained from this announcement.

Wide Horizons for Children, an adoption agency in New Hampshire (originally based in Waltham, Massachusetts) was one of the first adoption agencies in the northeast to have a

program in international Chinese adoption. Organizers at Wide Horizons agreed to post an announcement in the June 2011 issue of their electronic parent newsletter. It was distributed to adoptive parents from around the country. The announcement included a link to the recruitment flyer.

Since adoption agencies were unable to provide contact information of CAs directly, and since it was difficult to petition for interest directly from the adoptees (given their age), efforts were focused on contacting local chapters of Families with Children from China (FCC). As described on their website at [www.fwcc.org](http://www.fwcc.org), “FCC is a nondenominational organization of families who have adopted children from China. . . . [whose purpose is to] provide a network of support to parents who’ve adopted in China and to provide information” ([www.fwcc.org](http://www.fwcc.org), January 16, 2012). There are chapters of FCC in almost every state. A directory of contacts for all the FCC chapters was available online at this website. This directory was used to contact the local chapters of FCC in New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. All chapters were contacted via email, and received the recruitment flyer as an attachment. Responses were received from FCC-Greater NY (serving the New York Metropolitan region, including the New York, New Jersey, and Long Island suburbs) and FCC-New England (serving greater Boston and Eastern Massachusetts). Administrators of the New York chapter agreed to post the call for participants on their listserv in September 2011. The New England chapter included an announcement in a June 2011 email newsletter. The national website of FCC ([www.fwcc.org](http://www.fwcc.org)) also posted an announcement on the main website and Facebook website in June 2011. The aforementioned newsletters and postings resulted in 13 inquiries and 6 ultimate participants for the study.

## **Sampling Methods**

Once a few participants were obtained, snowball or chain sampling was employed. Snowball sampling was felt to be necessary, since fewer than 2,000 children nationwide were adopted from China prior to 1995 (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2011; U.S. Department of State, 2011), resulting in a limited pool of possible participants between the ages of 16 and 21. Additionally, families with children adopted from China often network with other families with Chinese children through adoption agencies, support groups such as FCC, and travel groups. Two participants were obtained through snowball sampling.

The nature of this study necessitated that all participants be self-selected volunteers. Therefore, efforts were made to obtain as diverse a group of participants as possible. Gall et al. (2003), describe a selection process called *maximum variation sampling*, which “involves selecting cases that illustrate the range of variation in the phenomena to be studied” (p. 179), and that this type of sample requires at least 10 cases, or participant groups. In order to achieve a maximum variation sample, the research plan was to obtain between 8 and 12 participants representing different ages, family structures, school settings, community settings, and religious affiliations. The final group of participants included 11 female Chinese adoptees, parents, and educators. This resulted in a total of 33 volunteers across 11 cases.

## **Participants**

**Adoptee participants.** The 11 adoptee participants were between 16 and 20 years of age ( $M = 17.4$ ). The sample included adoptees from rural, suburban, and urban locales. Six were from the northeast portion of the United States, 3 from the southeast, 1 from the mid-atlantic, and 1 from the midwest. Between kindergarten and the twelfth grade, 5 of the

participants attended public schools, 3 attended private or parochial schools, and 3 attended a combination. Five of the participants were presently attending college, and the remaining 6 were still in high school. Three of the adoptees were only children, and the rest had combinations of biological and/or adopted siblings. Seven of the adoptees were interviewed in person and 4 were interviewed via Skype.

**Parent participants.** The parent participants were between 50 and 73 years of age ( $M = 60$ ). All but one of the 11 parents participating were female. A variety of family types were represented through the sample. The parents included 7 married mothers, 1 married father, 2 single mothers, 1 divorced mother, and 1 widow. Seven of the parents were interviewed in person and 4 were interviewed via Skype.

**Educator participants.** The educators who participated in the study were selected by each adoptee and contacted after appropriate written consent was obtained from the adoptee and parent (where necessary). The 11 educator participants included classroom teachers, counselors or advisors, and 1 principal. Educators had from 7 to 40 years of experience in education ( $M = 20.9$ ). There were 9 female educators and 2 male. Eight of the educators were interviewed via Skype, 2 were interviewed face-to-face, and 1 by telephone only with no Skype video.

### **Description of Research Design**

A multiple case study qualitative research design was utilized in this study. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define a multi-case study as involving two or more participants in order to provide a detailed examination of a particular event. The researcher desired to study the characteristics of CAs between 16 and 21 years of age. The unit of analysis (or subject) was the adoptee. Each case consisted of the adoptee, one parent, and one educator.

The overarching research question of the investigation was: From their own perspective as adolescents and young adults, what is the essence of the experience of being a CA in different sociological contexts at home, at school, and within the community? The researcher conducted individual interviews with each adoptee in order to fulfill this primary goal. The voices of the CAs were critical to answering the aforementioned research question. As Seidman stated, “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (1998, p. 3).

The rationale for including the perspectives of the parents and educators is twofold. The first was to provide triangulation of the data through different sources of information—the adoptee, parent, and educator (Figure 4). In a naturalistic inquiry, triangulation is one mode “of improving the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible. . . . One often encounters phrases such as, ‘No report was credited unless it could be verified by another person’” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305). The second purpose for using these additional sources was to satisfy the goals of the study, which were to investigate the home, school, and community experiences of the adoptee. The additional perspectives of the parents and educators were intended to provide thicker descriptions of the experiences across the three contextual environments. The researcher sought to gain insight into those experiences from these three sources.

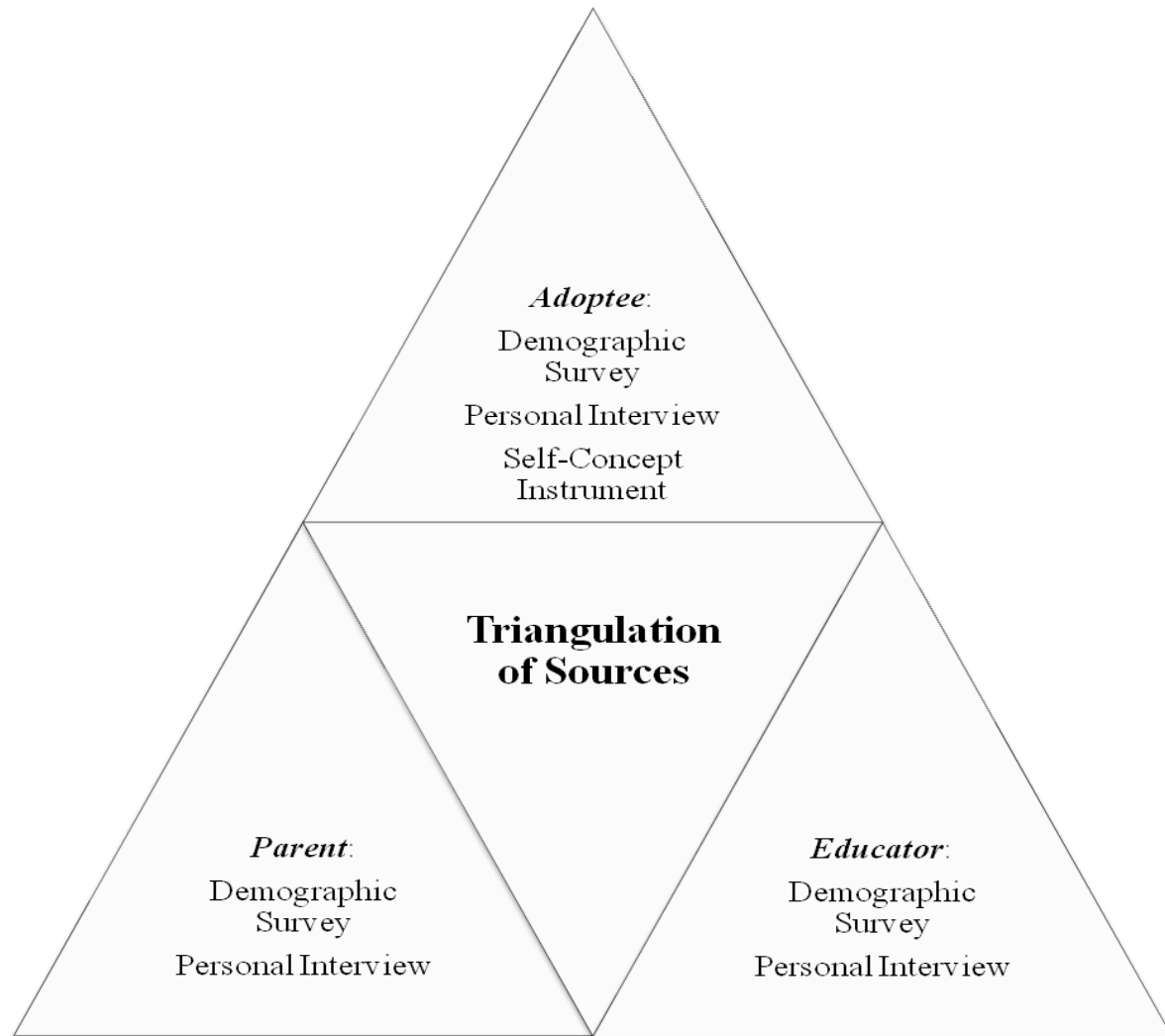


Figure 4. Triangulation of sources.

Case study research involves inductive analysis of the data without preconceived notions of what is to be found (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). It requires a blend of theoretical bases with the themes that emerge from the data. A phenomenological approach would have been an option for this study. However, this approach is based on continued sampling until the data have reached a point of redundancy—an option that was not practical, given the constraints of time and funding for the research. “Unless the group is very large one soon

comes to the point at which efforts to net additional members cannot be justified in terms of the additional outlay of energy and resources” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 233).

### **Instrumentation**

The instruments used in this study were all written by the researcher, except for the PAsCI (Fleming, 2007). Table 2 details the seven methods used with the three participant sources and how they each relate to the contexts and research questions of the study. The adoptee participants each completed a demographic survey, participated in an individual interview, and completed the PAsCI, a self-concept assessment. The parent and educator participants each completed a demographic survey and participated in an individual interview. Each instrument is described in detail in this section, organized by participant source.

Table 2

*Interaction Between Methods, Data Sources, Contexts, and Research Questions*

Data Collection Method	Source	Context	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
Adoptee demographic survey	Adoptee	Home School Community	X	X			
Adoptee interview	Adoptee	Home School Community	X	X			X
PASCI	Adoptee	Home School Community	X	X			X
Parent demographic survey	Parent	Home School Community			X		X
Parent interview	Parent	Home School Community			X		X
Educator demographic survey	Educator	School				X	X
Educator interview	Educator	School				X	X



## **Adoptee**

Prior to use in the study, the adoptee survey and interview protocol were reviewed by a Korean adoptee for readability, applicability, and coherence. No changes were recommended to the survey, but several changes were recommended for the interview protocol. Five of the interview items, and the first paragraph of the instructions, were reworded for more clarity or a more positive tone. In addition, four probes and two additional questions were added. The survey and interview protocol were then piloted with a 13-year-old CA in order for the researcher to become comfortable with the protocol. As a result of the pilot test, the wording of some items was changed slightly, and some additional probes were included. For example, question 17 in the adoptee interview protocol was changed from “Do you consider yourself a good student?” to the less leading form “Can you describe yourself as a student?” Question 24 was changed from “If you were giving advice to educators about working with children who are adopted...” to “If you were giving feedback to an educator about working with children who are adopted...”

The parent demographic survey and interview protocol were reviewed by the parent of a Korean adoptee for readability and coherence. They were also piloted with the parent of a 13-year-old CA. Minor changes were made to the demographic survey after the pilot and the first few parents utilized it. Those changes included additional educational categories, a question regarding whether anyone else in the family was adopted, and an item inquiring how they found out about the study. No changes were made to the interview protocol.

The educator demographic survey and interview protocol were reviewed by a professional school counselor for readability, applicability, and coherence. No changes were

recommended to either of these instruments as a result of this review. The educator demographic survey and interview protocol were not field tested.

**Adoptee demographic surveys.** Each adoptee completed a 10-item demographic survey (Appendix A) created by the researcher. Survey questions included generalized information regarding current age, age at adoption, work, school, and marital status, and information pertaining to siblings in the adoptive family. The purpose was to obtain descriptive information regarding the adoptee's history, family makeup, and current life circumstances. It took approximately 2 minutes to complete and was immediately returned to the researcher in face-to-face interviews. In cases with Skype interviews, it was completed by the adoptee and returned to the researcher prior to the interviews.

**Adoptee interviews.** An individual semi-structured interview was conducted using an interview protocol (Appendix B), also written by the researcher. The protocol contained 46 open-ended questions separated into different sections by context including Home and Family, School and Academics, Future Plans, Peers and Social Relationships, and Community. Questions were followed by possible probes that could be used during the interview to elicit deeper responses. The interview protocol was used as a guide for the researcher during the interviews, with questions being asked in the same general order in each interview. Merriam (1998) notes that new researchers may need to rely on a schedule of interview questions in order to gain experience and confidence. The questions were developed based upon the research questions and review of the literature.

The interviews were conducted over a period of six months, from July through December 2011. Appointments were made via email correspondence and a reminder email was sent as a confirmation a few days prior to each scheduled interview. Whenever possible,

the interviews were conducted in person at the adoptee's home. Parent presence during the interviews was discouraged, but two parents still chose to remain within listening distance during the adoptee interviews. Seven of the adoptee interviews were conducted in person; the remaining four were conducted via Skype. In these four cases, it was not possible for the researcher to travel to the participants' homes because of geographic location.

Interviews took between two and two and one-half hours to complete. They were audio-recorded and later transcribed by a professional transcription service. The researcher used two separate recording devices so as to provide a backup in the event of technical problems. One was an Olympus digital voice recorder which created .mp3 digital files that were easily downloaded onto the researcher's computer. The second device was a recording pen, the Livescribe Echo pen (Livescribe, Inc., 2009) which created .m4a files. The researcher also used this pen to take notes during the interview. Special software allowed the notes to be downloaded visually, along with the audio, onto the researcher's computer. An advantage of this software was the ability to click on a specific portion of the notes and immediately hear the corresponding audio portion of the interview.

**The Personal and Academic Self-Concept Inventory (PASCI).** Each adoptee completed the PASCI (Fleming, 2007), located in Appendix C, for supplementary quantitative data pertaining to the adoptees' self-concept. The results served as a qualitative comparison to the adoptees' expressed views of their self-concept in the interviews. The PASCI was selected because it measures several components of the self-concept, including academic ability, social acceptance and anxiety, and parental acceptance. It was felt that these multiple components of the self-concept might provide valuable insight for use with adopted persons of this age.

The PASCI was designed to operationalize the components of the multifaceted, hierarchical theory of self-concept proposed by Shavelson et al. (1976). This model defines self-concept as: (a) multifaceted; (b) hierarchically organized from subareas of self-concept at the base, to the general self-concept at the top; (c) more stable at the top of the hierarchy and less stable at the bottom; (d) increasingly multifaceted as an individual matures with age; (e) both descriptive and evaluative; and (f) differentiated from other constructs (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985).

***Organization and scoring.*** The PASCI consists of nine subscales of the multifaceted construct of self-concept. The nine subscales are: Self-regard, Social Acceptance, Academic Ability, Verbal Ability, Mathematical Ability, Physical Appearance, Physical Ability, Parental Acceptance, and Social Anxiety. The instrument includes 45 items, 5 for each subscale, each containing a 7-point Likert-scale response format. The final scores for each subscale are summed and range from a low of 5 to a high of 35. For each of the subscales (excluding Social Anxiety), a higher score translates to a higher self-concept in that area, and a lower score a lower self-concept. A higher score for the Social Anxiety subscale translates to a higher level of anxiety in social situations, and a lower score translates to a lower level of anxiety.

The PASCI is a self-reporting rating scale which is appropriate for use with adolescents and young adults from grade 6 through college. The directions are easy to follow and the instrument is easy to administer with little additional direction. Each item is phrased as a question. The respondent answers the item by marking along the 7-point continuum from “practically never,” for a score of 1 point, to “very often,” for a score of 7 points. The Likert-scale items are not numbered. Twenty-two of the 45 items are reverse scored,

meaning an answer closer to “practically never” would be scored highest, and an answer closer to “very often” would be scored lowest. Figure 5 below shows a sample of each type of item from the PAsCI.

---

Do you often think that your family holds you in high regard?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

Do you often feel nervous or self-conscious when called upon to speak in front of others?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

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*Figure 5.* Sample PAsCI Items (Fleming, 2007).

***Validity and reliability.*** Fleming and Whalen (1990) report scores for internal consistency and test-retest reliability from an ethnically diverse sample of 338 college students from California and 222 high school students from Florida. Coefficient alphas for internal consistency ranged from a low of .69 on the Verbal Ability scale to a high of .94 on the Math Ability scale. Test-retest reliability scores (with one week between administrations) ranged from a low of .81 on the Social Acceptance scale to a high of .98 on the Math Ability scale. These scores are quite high for an affective instrument, for which a .70 or higher is considered an acceptable correlation (Gable & Wolf, 1993).

A more recent study which utilized the PAsCI (Gifford, 2005) showed comparable alpha coefficients ranging from .69 to .89. The Gifford study also reported coefficients for Academic Ability of .80 and Parental Acceptance of .84, two scales that were not reported on in the previously discussed report by Fleming and Whalen (1990).

Construct validity was established through convergent and discriminant validity (Fleming & Whalen, 1990). The PAsCI Social Anxiety scale was correlated with the

Fenigstein-Sheier-Buss (FSB) Social Anxiety scale, with a correlation of  $-.80$ , which was significant at  $p < .001$ . In addition, the Self-concept scales of the PAsCI had low correlations with the dissimilar Social Anxiety and Self-consciousness scales of the FSB, which shows that the constructs are appropriately discriminated by the assessment.

Although this instrument does not have a tremendous amount of validity and reliability data available, the results of the two studies mentioned above are impressive. During the Spring of 2010, the researcher piloted the instrument with three adopted individuals, ranging in age from 17 to 24. Two of the respondents were female and one was male. It took each respondent approximately 10 minutes to complete. All commented that the language was easily understood and the instrument was not too difficult or cumbersome to complete. As a result of this pilot, the researcher designed a spreadsheet to assist in scoring the individual items and calculate subscale and total scores on the PAsCI. Permission was obtained from the author to use the PAsCI for this research.

## **Parent**

**Parent demographic survey.** Following the adoptee interview, the researcher interviewed one parent. The parent first completed the 22-item demographic survey created by the researcher (Appendix D). The survey contained items pertaining to the parent(s)' gender, age, race, marital status, education level, occupation, and the age and gender of other children in the family. A section on school information was designed to gather data regarding the number of schools the adoptee attended and the racial demographics within those schools (including Caucasian, Latino, African American, Asian, and an "Other" category). A similar final section collected the same information regarding racial representation in the respective neighborhoods in which the adoptee lived. The parent survey

took approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete, and was immediately returned to the researcher in face-to-face interviews. In cases with Skype interviews, it was completed by the parent and returned to the researcher prior to the interviews.

**Parent interviews.** An individual semi-structured interview was conducted with the parent using a researcher-created interview protocol (Appendix E). The protocol contained 20 open-ended questions separated into different sections by context including Family, School, and Community/Social Experiences. The interview was designed to elicit information from the parent(s) about the child's, positive, negative, or unique experiences growing up as a CA.

Similar to the adoptee interviews, the parent interviews were conducted over a period of six months, from July through December, 2011. Appointments were made via email correspondence and a reminder email was sent as a confirmation a few days prior. Whenever possible, the interviews were conducted in person at the parent's home. Seven of the parent interviews were conducted in person; the remaining four were conducted via Skype. In three of these four cases, the parent interview was conducted the same (or next) day after the adoptee was interviewed. In the last case, the parent interview was conducted 3 weeks later than the interview with the adoptee. The parent interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes, and were audio-recorded using the same two recording devices previously described.

## **Educator**

**Educator demographic survey.** Prior to each educator interview, the participant completed an 11-item demographic survey (Appendix F) created by the researcher. The survey contained items inquiring about the educator's gender, age, race, education level,

professional position, experience, and special training in adoption or non-traditional families. A separate section on school information was designed to gather data regarding the capacity in which the educator knew the adoptee, the level and type of school the adopted child attends/attended, and the racial demographics within that school.

**Educator interviews.** The final interview in each case was conducted with the educator. An individual semi-structured interview protocol was created by the researcher (Appendix G). The protocol contained 16 open-ended questions in two sections including Academics and Peer/Social Experiences. The interview was designed to elicit information from the educator about the adoptee's self-concept and positive, negative, or unique experiences at school. The educator interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour, and were audio-recorded.

Whenever possible, the interviews were conducted in person with the educator. However, only two of the educator interviews were able to be conducted in person; the remaining nine were conducted via Skype. Skype was used in most of the educator cases for two reasons. The first was to show respect for the educator's time, since each was participating at the request of the adoptee. The second was the complexity of arranging the date and time with each adoptee, parent, and educator. The choice to use Skype technology for these interviews was deemed to be reasonable by the researcher because the educators were an additional source of information, not the primary participants of the study; therefore, the interviews were brief.

### **Field Notes**

The researcher maintained field notes throughout the data gathering process. Two types of field notes were recorded: descriptive and reflective. The former included portraits



of the participants, reconstruction of the dialogue, description of the physical setting, accounts of particular events, depiction of activities, and the observer's behavior. The latter included reflections on analysis, method, ethical dilemmas and conflicts, the observer's frame of mind, and points of clarification (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

### **Timeline and Data Collection Procedures**

Whenever possible, the researcher investigated each case separately, beginning with the adoptee interview. Then, the respective parent and educator were interviewed. The first case provided "a focus to define the parameters of the others" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 63). Field notes were written as soon as possible after each interview. The researcher set aside one month's time for conducting the first case. Subsequent cases were then conducted.

### **Timeline**

The research study followed the general timeline below:

1. April 2011—study proposal approved by the IRB of the university.
2. April through September 2011—advertised the study and recruited volunteers.
3. June 2011—field tested instruments and conducted pilot study of interviews.
4. June to July 2011—conducted the first case study.
5. July 2011 to February 2012—conducted remaining case studies consecutively (whenever possible), generated field notes, and transcribed data.
6. September 2011 to April 2012—performed member checking of interview transcripts.
7. February 2012 to July 2012—analyzed data, wrote case reports and results, developed themes.

8. July 2012—performed confirmability audit of data analysis and theme development.

## **Procedures**

**Initial contacts and consent.** Interested participants contacted the researcher via email. In some instances the parent made the initial contact, and in others the adoptee made the contact herself. The researcher responded to initial emails with a copy of the abstract of the study (Appendix P). Prospective participants under the age of 18 received different letters and consent forms (Appendices H and I) than those 18 years or older (Appendices K and L). The letters and abstract described the study and the details of each participant's involvement. In cases where the initial contact was made by the parent, the researcher recommended to the parent that he or she first discuss the research and the attached documents with his or her daughter to confirm her desire to participate.

Each adoptee 18 years of age or older gave written consent for the researcher to interview with a parent and an educator on their behalf. The adoptee participant provided the appropriate contact information via the consent form in order for the researcher to contact the parent and educator directly (Appendix K). In each case, the adoptee participant was asked to first personally contact the parent and educator to ask for their permission. Each participant under the age of 18 gave written assent for the researcher to conduct an interview with a parent and an educator on her behalf. The parent then gave written consent for the child and educator to participate (Appendix H).

**Interviewing and survey procedures.** An appointment was arranged with each adoptee participant and parent. Whenever possible, the interviews with the adoptee and parent were conducted in person at the participants' home on the same date. In all cases, the

adoptivee was interviewed first, followed by the parent, and the educator was interviewed last. Consent and assent forms were collected at the interviews. Demographic surveys and the self-concept instruments were also completed the day of the interviews. The researcher was responsible for all expenses incurred during the course of the study, so in-person interviews were not always feasible due to geographic location. In those cases, Skype interviews were conducted. As a result, a total of four cases necessitated the use of Skype for adoptivee and parent interviews. For remote interviews, all consent and assent forms, demographic surveys, and self-concept instruments were emailed, faxed, or mailed back to the researcher prior to the interview.

The researcher requested that the adoptivee first contact the educator personally before the researcher made the attempt to contact this individual herself. This provided the educators with a comfort level since the initial request came directly from the adoptivee. It also provided the security of knowing that permission had been obtained from the participant and her parent(s). Once participant and parental consent were obtained, the researcher contacted the educators by email to request the participation of each. Included with this email was the abstract of the study (Appendix P), an educator letter and consent form (Appendices J and M), and the educator demographic survey (Appendix F).

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) made several recommendations for interviews with strangers to help the interviewee feel at ease. They recommended beginning with “small talk,” assuring confidentiality, and clarifying the purpose of the research. In light of this, the researcher began the session with general conversation to build rapport, then the participant completed the demographic survey and consent/assent forms. Prior to the commencement of each interview, the researcher also: (a) reiterated the use of recording devices, explained the

purpose for the recordings, and verbally verified consent of their use; (b) reaffirmed the maintenance of confidentiality; and (c) asked the participant if her or she understood the purpose of the study and if each had any questions about the research.

At the beginning the interview, a set of instructions was read verbatim to the participant. These included the option to skip any question that made him or her uncomfortable. Breaks were periodically offered during the session. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher discussed follow-up. Each participant was informed that he or she would receive a copy of the written transcript and the final report, and were encouraged to review these for accuracy. In cases where the participant was under the age of 18, verbal parental consent to send the aforementioned documents directly to the adoptee was obtained.

**Transcription of interviews.** The researcher deemed it necessary to have all interviews transcribed by a professional transcription service, particularly because of the length of the interviews and the large number of them. Immediately after each interview the digital audio files were downloaded to the researcher's computer from both recording devices. The file of the best quality was uploaded to the transcription service's secure online drop box. Typed transcriptions were returned electronically via email to the researcher. The researcher reviewed each transcription for accuracy against the audio files and then sent the corrected transcription file to each participant for member checking. Each participant was asked to respond within three weeks regarding any errors or changes that were necessary. The changes were made prior to analysis of the transcripts.

**Follow-up.** Where needed for additional information or clarification, follow-up contact with selected participants was maintained. As a gesture of gratitude, every participant received a 25 dollar gift certificate after completing the initial interview. The

researcher felt the amount of 25 dollars was fitting, given the length of the interviews and personal nature of the study. The gift certificates were presented to each participant as a token of thanks for their time, not as remuneration (Seidman, 1998).

### **Data Analyses**

In order to allow themes to emerge, transcripts were coded using appropriate schemas that were determined as the analysis proceeded. Pre-coding was initially done by hand using pencil and paper copies of the transcripts (Saldaña, 2009). Transcripts were then imported into NVivo 9 (QSR International, 2010), a computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program, to aid in the process of coding and analyzing the interview transcripts. The first cycle of coding was conducted using the methods encouraged by Saldaña (2009) of descriptive, in vivo, and values coding. A second cycle coding was conducted for deeper contextual meaning. Codes were examined for content, organization, and relevance to the research questions of the study. As a result, some codes were merged, renamed, and re-organized into a hierarchical structure. Themes emerged from the resulting patterns and connections observed during the processes of coding, within-case analyses, and cross-case analyses. Themes were elicited through the use of an inductive, grounded theory approach (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

### **Limitations to the Study**

Guba (1981) identified four criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Krefting (1991) subsequently offered numerous strategies for ensuring trustworthiness within Guba's model. Many of these strategies were implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and reduce any threats to its validity and reliability.

**Truth value.** Also referred to as credibility, truth value can be thought of as the equivalent to the quantitative criteria of internal validity (Krefting, 1991). The voluntary sampling method and use of self-reporting instrumentation posed a possible concern for participant bias and might have skewed the findings toward positive results. In an effort to address this concern, a multi-case study design and maximum variation sampling method (Gall et al., 2003) were employed to provide for the most diverse range of cases possible, including exceptional cases (King & Horrocks, 2010). The design of the study and availability of resources did not allow for prolonged and varied field experiences as might be expected in a smaller scale case study with fewer participants. However, the research was designed to use multiple sources of data, and in-depth interview protocols to address this lack of extended exposure.

As recommended by Krefting (1991), several additional strategies were employed to ensure credibility of the findings. These included triangulation of sources, analytic methods, and theoretical bases. The researcher also established the authority of the interviewer, used appropriate individual interviewing techniques, maintained detailed journals, reported direct quotes of participants, and allowed for member checking.

Triangulation of sources was used by including the adoptee, one of the adoptee's parents, and an educator of the adoptee for each case. This allowed for the inclusion of multiple perspectives. The study was designed and analyzed through a combination of theoretical perspectives. The case study theory of Merriam (1998) and Bogdan and Biklen (2003) were applied to design the study; transcripts were coded utilizing the methods recommended by Saldaña (2009); and, thematic analyses were conducted utilizing the suggestions put forth by Bernard and Ryan (2010) and King and Horrocks (2010).

The researcher was qualified to conduct the research because she had specialized training in interviewing as a certified counselor, and had specific knowledge of Chinese adoption as the parent of two CAs. The researcher also had the instruments reviewed by peers in the field of adoption prior to their use in the study, and conducted a pilot case study prior to commencing the project. Throughout the processes of data collection, coding, and analysis, the researcher maintained: copious field notes; a log of activities, contacts, and methods; and, an ongoing reflexivity journal of personal thoughts, biases, and values.

Member checking was performed with all participants. All participants were initially presented with a copy of the written transcript of their interview. This allowed participants multiple opportunities to “correct errors of fact and challenge what are perceived to be wrong interpretations. . . .[or] to volunteer additional information. . .” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 315). Terminal member checking was conducted with interested participants. Those participants were provided with the final written results of the analyses. Finally, in an effort to report impartial results that represented the words and thoughts of the participants, numerous direct quotes were provided within the results.

**Applicability.** The second standard of trustworthiness in qualitative research, sometimes referred to as transferability, is often thought of as similar to external validity in quantitative research. The question to be addressed in applicability is whether the data are representative of the larger group. A significant limitation to this study is that the results cannot be generalized to all CAs, or to other groups of international adoptees. Applicability was not the goal of this research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) encourage qualitative researchers to adequately describe the data base that will allow the potential user of the research to make

the final judgment of applicability. In response to this limitation, dense descriptions and demographics of the 11 cases were provided in Chapter 4 to maintain contextual meaning.

**Consistency.** Guba's (1981) third standard of trustworthiness in qualitative research is called consistency, or dependability. This can be thought of as reliability in a quantitative study. In other words, if this study were replicated, would the results be consistent? Threats to the dependability of this study are that (a) data were obtained primarily through self-report of the participants, and (b) the scope of the study was extensive. To address these threats, the researcher used triangulation of sources and methods of data collection. This was done with the hope of enhancing or confirming the perspectives of adoptees from the perspectives of others who knew them. The researcher also maintained an auditable trail of the methods, procedures, and analyses throughout the research project. A detailed description of the research methods was provided in the methodology section, and copies of protocols and other instrumentation were provided in the appendices in order for the study to be replicated. Finally, the researcher used a code-recode procedure during the analysis phase of the study, completing a minimum of two coding phases.

**Neutrality.** Guba's (1981) fourth standard of trustworthiness is called neutrality, or confirmability, which is similar to objectivity in quantitative research (Krefting, 1991). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended shifting the emphasis on objectivity in qualitative studies, with more emphasis on ensuring objectivity of the data than the objectivity of the researcher, suggesting a confirmability audit to validate trustworthiness and neutrality. The researcher also maintained a reflexivity journal and coding memos during analysis as a way to ensure consistency and neutrality. Triangulation of sources, which has already been discussed above, was employed to ensure consistency and neutrality.



## **Summary**

This chapter delineated the method in which the research was conducted. It began with a biography of the researcher's background, followed by a statement of ethics and confidentiality for the research. The five research questions explored throughout the study were then offered. Next, the recruitment procedures, sampling methods, and participants were described. The research design was presented, followed by a detailed description of the instruments developed for, and utilized in the study. A timeline for the research, data collection, and analysis procedures were elucidated. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the limitations of the research. The next chapter will discuss the specific details of data analysis and a complete explanation of the findings of the research.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA AND EXPLANATION OF THE FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight qualitatively from young adult Chinese adoptees (CAs) who were of an age at which they could personally reflect upon their own experiences. The focus was the development of identity, the experiences of academic life, and the quality of family, peer, social, and community relationships. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do adolescent and young adult CAs perceive their experiences in different sociological contexts: at home, with peers, at school, and in the community?
2. Retrospectively, how do CAs perceive their life experiences at different stages of development: during childhood, during adolescence, and at present?
3. How do parents view their child's family, social, and academic experiences?
4. How do educators (as defined by teachers, school counselors, coaches, and the like), who work with the CAs view their academic progress and overall adjustment?
5. How do the perspectives of the CAs compare to those of their parents and educators?

To answer the research questions, 33 individual interviews were conducted over an eight-month period. The interviews were conducted in person or via Skype with 11 female CAs, ranging in age from 16 to 20 years. One parent and one educator of each adoptee were also interviewed. All participants completed a demographic survey, and each adoptee participant completed the PASCI, a self-concept survey. The study was designed as a multi-case study with 11 total cases.

This chapter begins with an overview of the three participant groups—adoptees, parents, and educators. Then, individual profiles of each of the 11 cases present demographic details of the 33 participants. Next, the steps of the analysis procedures are described. The chapter concludes with a detailed discussion of the overarching themes that emerged from the analysis of the data, and their relationship to the research questions.

### **Description of Participants**

#### **Adoptee Participants**

Eleven CAs volunteered to participate in the study. The participants were between 16 and 20 years of age ( $M = 17.4$ ). The sample included adoptees from rural, suburban, and urban locales. Six were from the northeast portion of the United States, 3 from the southeast, 1 from the mid-atlantic, and 1 from the midwest. Between kindergarten and the twelfth grade, 5 of the participants attended public schools, 3 attended private or parochial schools, and 3 attended a combination of public and private/parochial schools. Five of the participants had graduated high school and were presently attending (or about to start) college and the remaining 6 were still in high school. Three of the adoptees were only children, and the rest had a combination of biological and/or adopted siblings. The demographics of the adoptee participants appear in Table 3.

Table 3

*Demographics of Adoptee Participants and Their Siblings*

Adoptee Demographics						Sibling Demographics			How Recruited	Interview Format
Adoptee Pseudonym	Current Age	Age at Adoption	Grade <sup>a</sup>	Parent Marital Status <sup>b</sup>	No. of Siblings	Age	Gender	Sibling's Status in Family		
Amy	19	8 mo.	13	M	1	26	M	Biological	Networking	In person
Brianna	19	48 mo.	13	M	5	34	M	Biological	FCC <sup>c</sup>	In person and Skype
						32	F	Biological		
						30	M	Biological		
						20	F	Adopted		
						10	F	Adopted		
Caitlyn	20	7 mo.	15	M	5	34	M	Biological	FCC <sup>c</sup>	In person
						32	F	Biological		
						30	M	Biological		
						19	F	Adopted		
						10	F	Adopted		
Didi	18	36 mo.	13	W	0	--	--	--	Networking	Skype

*Note.* N = 11. *M* age of adoptee participants = 17.4 years. *M* age at adoption = 16.8 months.

<sup>a</sup> Grade 13 is a college freshman, grade 14 is a college sophomore, and grade 15 is a college junior.

<sup>b</sup> M = married, W = widowed, S = single, D = divorced.

<sup>c</sup> FCC is Families with Children from China.

Table 3 (continued)

*Demographics of Adoptee Participants and Their Siblings*

Adoptee Demographics						Sibling Demographics			How Recruited	Interview Format
Adoptee Pseudonym	Current Age	Age at Adoption	Grade <sup>a</sup>	Parent Marital Status <sup>b</sup>	No. of Siblings	Age	Gender	Sibling's Status in Family		
Emily	19	12 mo.	14	M	3	25	M	Biological	Snowball	Skype
						23	M	Biological		
						21	M	Biological		
Fang	16	8 mo.	11	M	1	19	F	Adopted	FCC <sup>c</sup>	In person
Grace	16	6 mo.	10	S	0	--	--	--	FCC <sup>c</sup>	In person
Hannah	16	6 mo.	11	D	1	39	F	Biological (Father)	Snowball	In person
Ivy	16	3 mo.	10	M	1	11	F	Adopted	FCC <sup>c</sup>	Skype
Jenna	16	30 mo.	11	S	0	--	--	--	FCC <sup>c</sup>	In person
Kayla	16	16 mo.	11	M	2	36	F	Biological (Father)	Networking	Skype
						14	M	Adopted		

*Note.* N = 11. *M* age of adoptee participants = 17.4 years. *M* age at adoption = 16.8 months.

<sup>a</sup> Grade 13 is a college freshman, grade 14 is a college sophomore, and grade 15 is a college junior.

<sup>b</sup> M = married, W = widowed, S = single, D = divorced.

<sup>c</sup> FCC is Families with Children from China.

## **Parent Participants**

The 11 parent participants were between 50 and 73 years of age ( $M = 60$ ). Ten out of the 11 parents participating were female. All parents and their respective spouses, where applicable, were Caucasian. Parents varied in educational level and marital status. The demographics of the parent participants appear in Table 4.

Table 4

*Demographics of Parent Participants and Spouses*

Parent Pseudonym	Interview Format	Marital Status <sup>a</sup>		Age		Educational Level Attained	
		Initial <sup>b</sup>	Current	Participant	Spouse	Participant	Spouse
Mrs. A	In person	M	M	52	53	HS Graduate	HS Graduate
Mrs. B	In person	M	M	62	63	Masters	Doctoral
Mr. C	In person	M	M	63	62	Doctoral	Masters
Mrs. D	Skype	W	W	73	--	Bachelors	--
Mrs. E	Skype	M	M	50	51	Bachelors	Masters
Mrs. F	In person	M	M	58	60	Masters	Masters
Ms. G	In person	S	S	62	--	Doctoral	--
Ms. H	In person	M	D	60	--	Doctoral	--
Mrs. I	Skype	M	M	64	55	Masters	Associates
Ms. J	In person	S	S	61	--	Bachelors	--
Mrs. K	Skype	M	M	52	65	Bachelors	Masters

*Note.* N = 11, *M* age of parent participants = 60.

<sup>a</sup> M = married, W = widowed, S = single, D = divorced.

<sup>b</sup> Initial Marital Status pertains to the marital status of the parent participant at the time the child was adopted.

## **Educator Participants**

The 11 educator participants were selected by the adoptees. Nine of the educators were presently classroom teachers (two of whom also held administrative posts in addition to teaching), one was a retired administrator, and one a director of counseling. Nine worked at the high school level, and the other two at a middle school. The educators had a wide range of experience ( $M = 20.9$ ) and education. Two held a bachelors degree, seven held a masters degree, one a sixth year diploma (beyond the masters degree), and one held a doctoral degree. The demographics of the educator participants appear in Table 5.



Table 5

*Demographics of Educator Participants*

Educator Pseudonym	Race <sup>a</sup>	Years of Experience in Education	Relationship To Adoptee	Public or Private School	Interview Format
Ms. Duncan	C	20	Teacher & Advisor	Public	In person
Ms. Lynch	C	25	Advisor & Coach	Private	Skype
Ms. Chase	C	26	Teacher & Advisor	Private	Skype
Ms. Peterson	C	34	Counselor	Private	Skype
Ms. Scribner	C	18	Teacher & Advisor	Private	Skype
Ms. Sullivan	C	40+	Administrator	Public	Skype
Ms. Dunn	C	20	Teacher	Public	In person
Ms. Cohen	C	13	Teacher	Public	Skype
Ms. Walters	AA	16	Teacher & Coach	Public	Skype
Mr. Drew	AA	11	Teacher	Private	Skype
Mr. Kessler	C	7	Teacher	Public	By telephone

*Note.* N = 11. *M* years of experience in education = 20.9.

<sup>a</sup>C = Caucasian, AA = African American

## **Demographic Case Profiles**

### **Case 1—Amy**

Amy was 19 years old at the time of the interview. She had just finished her freshman year of college. Amy was 8 months old at adoption, and was considered a special needs adoption due to a cleft lip and palate. She was interviewed during the summer of 2011, during which she was working as a camp counselor. When not away at school, Amy lived with her mother and father. She had one brother, eight years her senior, who was the biological child of her parents. Her brother was presently single living on his own.

Amy lived her entire life in the same neighborhood and town in the northeast. It was originally a rural town but had become more sub-urban in recent years. In 2010, the state's economic resources center records indicated that the population of the town was 12,678 (385/square mile). The 2010 median age was 40 years old and the median household income was \$90,190.

Amy attended the local public schools from kindergarten through the twelfth grade; excluding her freshman year of high school when she attended a parochial high school. The district's strategic school profile for 2009-2010 reported a total district enrollment of 2,156 students with four schools (one at each level). Approximately 7.6% of the students in the district were eligible for free/reduced-price meals and 94.4% of kindergarten students attended some form of pre-school, nursery school, or head start program. The demographics of the district were: 92.9% Caucasian, 3.1% Latin American, 1.9% African American, 1.9% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% Native American. At the time of the interview, Amy was entering her sophomore year of college majoring in Nursing. The school she was attending was a parochial college a few hours' drive from her home.

Amy found out about the research study through word-of-mouth from an acquaintance that saw the call for participants. She was interviewed in person by the researcher at her home in July 2011. Amy's mother asked if she could join us during the interview, and she remained for about one-third of the duration. Amy presented at the interview as talkative, personable, and seemed interested in the research. The interview lasted about 90 minutes.

**Amy's Mother (Mrs. A).** Mrs. A was a Caucasian woman in her 50s who was married at the time of Amy's adoption and was presently still married. She worked as a tax collector. Her interview was conducted immediately after Amy's interview, also in person at her home. Her interview lasted 30 minutes. Mrs. A was very accommodating and appeared to enjoy speaking about her daughter. In a similar vein to Amy's interview, Amy chose to sit in on Mrs. A's interview. It was apparent during these interactions that mother and daughter were very close, as they did not appear at all uncomfortable with one another's presence.

**Amy's Educator (Ms. Duncan).** Ms. Duncan was Amy's high school English teacher for three years and her national honor society advisor. She was a Caucasian woman in her 40s, held a sixth year professional degree, and had 20 years experience in education. She was also the English department chairperson. The interview was conducted in her home on a weekend summer day in July 2011. During the interview, Ms. Duncan was expressly clear and direct. She was well-spoken and thoughtful about her answers. She had no specific training or experience pertaining to working with adopted students, but did speak of some very close lifelong friends who were adopted. The interview lasted one hour.

## **Case 2—Brianna**

Brianna was also 19 years old at the time of her interview during the summer of 2011. She had just graduated from high school and was preparing for college. Brianna was 4 years old when she was adopted. She was working as a lifeguard for the summer and was still living at home with her parents until she began college in the fall. Brianna had four older siblings and one younger. Her oldest three siblings were the biological children of her parents, her next oldest sister (Caitlyn, who also participated in the study and is discussed below) and her younger sister were also adopted from China. In total, Brianna's family consisted of two boys and four girls. The three oldest children were in their 30s and living on their own, the three youngest were all adopted from China and were between 10 and 20 years old at the time of the study.

Brianna lived her entire life in the same rural, residential community in the northeast. In 2009, the state's economic resources center records indicated that the population of the town was 10,997 (268/square mile). The 2009 median age was 42 years old and the median household income was \$105,102. The 2009 racial demographics of the town were: 90.7% Caucasian, 3.0% Latin American, 4.0% African American, 2.0% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% Native American.

Brianna attended private schools. According to the school website, the high school she graduated from had a total enrollment of 680 students; 23% were students of color and 17% were international students. At the time of the interview, Brianna was about to enter her freshman year of college. The school she was planning to attend was a private liberal arts college a few hours' drive from her home.

Brianna and her sister found out about the research study in a call for participants advertised through Families with Children from China. She was interviewed in person by the researcher at her home in July 2011. Brianna's sister, Caitlyn, also volunteered to participate in the study and was interviewed on the same day. Brianna was friendly and graciously welcomed the interviewer into her home. The interview had to be cut short due to scheduling, and continued five days later via Skype. Brianna was a bit rushed during the face-to-face interview since she had to leave early. Five days later, during the Skype interview, she appeared much more relaxed. Despite technical difficulties with the Skype connection consistently being interrupted, Brianna was patient and answered questions thoughtfully and completely, even when she had to repeat some of them. Both portions of the interview lasted 90 minutes combined.

**Brianna's Mother (Mrs. B).** Mrs. B was a Caucasian woman in her 60s who was married at the time of Brianna's adoption and was presently still married. She held a masters degree and worked as a teacher. Her interview was conducted immediately after Brianna's interview, also in person. Mrs. B was a little quiet at first, but as time passed she became more forthcoming. The interview with Mrs. B lasted 40 minutes.

**Brianna's Educator (Ms. Lynch).** Ms. Lynch was Brianna's academic advisor and swim coach during high school. She was a Caucasian woman in her 40s, held a masters degree, and had 25 years experience in education. She was also a history teacher and the dean of students. The interview was conducted via Skype in August 2011. During the interview, Ms. Lynch was pleasant and cooperative. Her answers were thoughtful and clearly stated. Ms. Lynch had no specific training related to working with adopted students. Ms. Lynch not only worked with Brianna as an advisor and coach, but she was also familiar

with Brianna's family, so she was able to discuss Brianna's experiences from a number of different perspectives. The interview lasted 25 minutes.

### **Case 3—Caitlyn**

Caitlyn was 20 years old at the time of her interview during the summer of 2011. She had just completed her sophomore year of college. Caitlyn was 7 months old when she was adopted. She was working as a lifeguard and living at home with her parents for the summer. Caitlyn had three older siblings and two younger. Her oldest three siblings were the biological children of her parents; her two younger sisters were also adopted from China (including Brianna discussed above).

As with Brianna, Caitlyn lived her entire life in the same rural, residential community in the northeast. The same demographics are repeated here. In 2009, the state's economic resources center records indicated that the population of the town was 10,997 (268/square mile). The 2009 median age was 42 years old and the median household income was \$105,102. The 2009 racial demographics of the town were: 90.7% Caucasian, 3.0% Latin American, 4.0% African American, 2.0% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% Native American.

Caitlyn attended the same private elementary and secondary schools as her sister. She was currently enrolled at a private, research based college several hours drive from her home, also in the Northeast. Her major was history (Asian studies) with a minor in women and gender studies.

As mentioned above, Caitlyn and her sister found out about the research study in a call for participants advertised through Families with Children from China. She was interviewed in person by the researcher at her home in July 2011, the same day as her sister

and parents. Caitlyn was outgoing, vivacious, and confident. She was interested in participating in the study and was easy to speak with. The interview lasted 2 hours and 15 minutes.

**Caitlyn's Father (Mr. C).** Mr. C was a Caucasian man in his 60s. He held a doctoral degree and was also a teacher, like his wife. He was a soft-spoken, polite man. The interview was conducted in person on the same day as Caitlyn's interview. It was evident from meeting with him that he revered his wife and children. He spoke of Caitlyn with veneration. He was not only involved in his children's educational pursuits, but in their athletic pursuits, as well. He coached some of the girls' athletic teams and was an athlete himself. The interview lasted 30 minutes.

**Caitlyn's Educator (Ms. Chase).** Ms. Chase was Caitlyn's biology teacher and academic advisor for two years in high school. She was a Caucasian woman in her 50s, held a bachelors degree, and had 26 years experience in education. The interview was conducted via Skype in September 2011. Ms. Chase seemed to really want to help with the research, and answered all questions openly without hesitation. Although she was extremely busy and only had 45 minutes between classes to speak with the interviewer, she did not rush through her answers. Ms. Chase had no specific training related to working with adopted students. However, she did comment that she has learned through experience to be cognizant of the fact that some students are not biologically related to their parents or other family members, particularly when designing science projects that pertain to genetics. The interview lasted 40 minutes.

#### **Case 4—Didi**

Didi was 18 years old at the time of her interview during the summer of 2011. She had just graduated from high school and was preparing to go off to college in a few weeks. Didi was 3 years old when she was adopted. She was the only child of a widowed mother.

Didi lived in the northeast until the end of first grade. She then moved to the southeast and remained in the same town until the present. She spent her summers in Norway with her mother and other family members who lived there. As a result, she was bilingual in English and Norwegian. The town in which Didi lived was a small oceanfront, island community with 1,775 seasonal and 584 permanent residents within 1,643 acres. There were no demographics available for this community, but her mother did indicate that there were very few children in the neighborhood as many of the residents were elderly.

Didi attended a public school in the northeast through first grade. When she first moved to the southeast she attended a private school for one year. From third through fifth grade, she attended a public elementary school. After fifth grade, Didi attended a parochial middle school, and then a private high school. Again, there were no racial demographics available for the high school that Didi attended, but she did state during her interview that there were no Asians in her middle school and only one other Asian in her high school that she was aware of. The educator who was interviewed on Didi's behalf indicated on the demographic form for the high school that there were "Many" Caucasian, "Some" Latin American, "Some" African American, and "None or Very Few" Asian Americans. The school website reported a total 2011-2012 enrollment of 460 students in pre-school through grade 12, and a college matriculation rate of 100%. Her mother also indicated on the demographic survey that Didi's schools consisted of "Many" Caucasian students.



Didi found out about the research study through word of mouth. Her high school college counselor was an acquaintance of the researcher who was aware of the nature of the research. The counselor notified Didi about the study, and Didi contacted the researcher directly to express her interest in participating. She was interviewed by the researcher via Skype from her home in Norway in August 2011. Didi was friendly and forthcoming during the interview. The interview lasted 2 hours.

**Didi's Mother (Mrs. D).** Mrs. D was a Caucasian woman in her 70s with a thick Norwegian accent. She held a bachelors degree and was retired from a dual career in counseling and the travel industry. She was widowed prior to Didi's adoption and raised Didi on her own. Mrs. D was interviewed via Skype immediately after her daughter was interviewed. She was very amenable to the interview in spite of technological difficulties with the Skype connection and her lack of familiarity with the technology. Mrs. D spoke of her daughter with reverence and pride. The interview lasted 40 minutes, including technological interruptions.

**Didi's Educator (Ms. Peterson).** Ms. Peterson was Didi's college counselor during high school. She was a Caucasian woman in her 50s, held a masters degree, and had 34 years experience in education. The interview was conducted via Skype in August 2011. Ms. Peterson had no specific training related to working with adopted students, but had worked with numerous students from non-traditional families throughout her 34 years as a counselor. She had known Didi since her sophomore year in high school. She talked about Didi with a smile and described her as an incredibly hard-worker who was sensitive, caring, and non-judgmental. The interview lasted 40 minutes.

## **Case 5—Emily**

Emily was 19 years old at the time of the interview. She was 12 months old at adoption. Emily had just started her sophomore year of college at a new school, having transferred from a different college she had attended freshman year. She was interviewed in September 2011. When not away at school, Emily lived with her mother and father. She had three older brothers, who were all biological children of her parents. Her brothers were all presently in their 20s and living on their own.

Emily lived in a small suburban town in the northeast until the end of fourth grade when her family moved. Since moving she lived in the same city in the southeast. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that city's population at 229,000 (1,729.6/square mile). The 2010 median age was 34.6 years old and the median household income was \$41,483 (adjusted for inflation to 2010 dollars). The city's racial demographics were reported as: 51.2% Caucasian, 34.7% African American, 2.1% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.4% Native American, 2.4% Mixed race, and 9.2% Other (those of Latin American heritage were included with these numbers).

Prior to moving, Emily attended local public schools in the northeast from kindergarten through fourth grade. That district's strategic school profile for 2009-2010 reported a total district enrollment of 2,156 students. The demographics of the district were: 92.9% Caucasian, 3.1% Latin American, 1.9% African American, 1.9% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% Native American.

After moving to the southeast, Emily attended public school for one year, and then attended all private schools until she graduated from high school. There were no racial demographics available for the private schools she attended. Emily indicated during her

interview that her high school was “predominantly White” and her mother indicated on her demographic form that in the private schools there were “Many” Caucasians, and “None or Very Few” Latin Americans, African Americans, or Asian Americans. At the time of the interview, Emily was beginning her sophomore year of college majoring in fashion merchandising. The school she was attending was a private girls college a few hours’ drive from her home.

Emily found out about the research from a friend who had also participated in the study. Emily was interviewed via Skype from her dorm at college during September 2011. Emily presented as talkative and casual. She seemed rushed and disinterested at the beginning, often giving short answers. However, as the interview progressed, her answers became more descriptive. The interview lasted just under 2 hours.

**Emily’s Mother (Mrs. E).** Mrs. E was a Caucasian woman in her 50s who was married at the time of Emily’s adoption and was presently still married. She held a bachelors degree and was employed as a dental hygienist. She did not work out of the home while raising her children. The interview was conducted via Skype in October 2011. Mrs. E appeared a little nervous during the interview. It was apparent from speaking with her that she was very close with Emily and concerned about her needs and welfare. She clearly expressed that she would do anything for her daughter’s happiness. The interview lasted 30 minutes.

**Emily’s Educator (Ms. Scribner).** Ms. Scribner was Emily’s art teacher, counselor, and national art honor society advisor during high school. She was a Caucasian woman in her 40s, held a masters degree, and had 18 years experience in education. Ms. Scribner was also the fine arts director at the school. The interview was conducted via Skype in October

2011. Ms. Scribner seemed to be fond of Emily, and talked about her candidly. She had no specific training related to working with adopted students. Ms. Scribner did, however, mention that she knew Emily's family fairly well and noted that knowing the family was helpful to her in her dealings with Emily at school. The interview lasted 20 minutes.

### **Case 6—Fang**

Fang was 16 years old at the time of the interview and was a junior in high school. Fang was 8 months old at adoption. Fang lived with her mother and father. She had one sister, 3 years her senior, who was also adopted from China. Her sister was presently away at college.

Fang lived her entire life in the same neighborhood in a northeastern city. According to the 2010 census the population of the town was 58,732 (8,637/square mile). The 2010 median age was 34 years old and the median household income (adjusted for inflation) was \$95,448.

Fang attended the local public schools. From kindergarten through eighth grade, she attended one of nine local public elementary schools. The school's website indicated a population of 572 students in 2011-2012. This particular elementary school was a magnet school that offered Mandarin Chinese to all students in grades K-6, and an option of Chinese or Spanish in grades 7 and 8. Fang was presently attending the local public high school, which had a 2011-2012 population of 1,804 students. Approximately 11.6% of the students in the district were eligible for free/reduced-price meals. The racial demographics of the district were: 57.8% Caucasian, 9.6% Latin American, 6.7% African American, 18.3% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.0% Native American, and 7.6% Multi-race, Non-Hispanic (those of Latin American heritage were included with the numbers above).

Fang found out about the research study from her mother who saw the call for participants in the FCC adoption newsletter. She was interviewed in person at her home in October 2011. Fang presented at the interview as friendly, courteous, and relaxed. She expressed herself eloquently with the mature insight one would not expect from a 16-year-old. The interview lasted 2 hours.

**Fang's Mother (Mrs. F).** Mrs. F was a Caucasian woman in her 50s who was married at the time of Fang's adoption and was presently still married. She held a masters degree and was a public health consultant. Her interview was conducted immediately after Fang's interview, also in person. Mrs. F was soft-spoken and had a calm demeanor. It was evident that she had a tremendous amount of love for both of her daughters, and was invested in exposing them to as much Chinese culture as possible. The interview with Mrs. F lasted 35 minutes.

**Fang's Educator (Ms. Sullivan).** Ms. Sullivan was Fang's elementary school principal. She held that position for 26 years, but had recently retired. She was presently still working as a school evaluator. She was a Caucasian woman in her 60s, held a doctoral degree, and had more than 40 years experience in education. Ms. Sullivan had known Fang and her family since she was in preschool. Ms. Sullivan was also an adoptive mother. The interview was conducted via Skype in October 2011. During the interview, Ms. Sullivan was pleasant and cooperative. Her answers were insightful and she was very interested in seeing the results of the study. Ms. Sullivan had extensive experience working with adopted children. She held a masters degree in social work and was on the board of directors of the national adoption service, China Adoptions with Love. She established the Chinese language program at her elementary school which incorporated Chinese exchange teachers. She had

been to China four times, twice for extended visits to conduct training with exchange teachers. Given her background she was able to discuss Fang's experiences from a number of different perspectives. The interview lasted 30 minutes.

### **Case 7—Grace**

Grace was a high school sophomore who was just turning 16 at the time of her interview. Grace was 6 months old at adoption. She lived with her mother and was an only child. She worked part-time with her mother in her home-based veterinary clinic.

Grace lived her entire life in the same suburban neighborhood and town in the northeast. Her town was in a suburban residential area but was only a 20-mile drive to a large metropolitan city. The state's department of revenue website reported a 2010 population of 21,561 (1,182/square mile). The 1999 per capita income was reported to be \$33,510.

Grace attended the local public schools from kindergarten through the present. The district's strategic school profile for 2011-2012 reported a total district enrollment of 3,250 students with 883 students in the one public high school that Grace currently attended. Approximately 13% of the students in the district were eligible for free/reduced-price meals. The demographics of the district were: 76.9% Caucasian, 3.2% Latin American, 8.8% African American, 7.5% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.1% Native American, and 3.6% Multi-race, Non-Hispanic (those of Latin American heritage were included with these numbers).

Grace found out about the research study from her mother who saw the call for participants in the FCC adoption newsletter. She was interviewed in person at her home in October 2011. Grace presented at the interview as very shy and nervous. The interviewer

attempted to build rapport by talking about her interests, places she has traveled to, and interacting with her pets. Within a short amount of time Grace opened up and became more talkative. The interview lasted 2 hours, 20 minutes.

**Grace's Mother (Ms. G).** Ms. G was a Caucasian woman in her 60s who was single at the time of Grace's adoption and was presently still single. She held a doctoral degree and operated her own home-based veterinary clinic. Her interview was conducted immediately after Grace's interview, also in person at her home. Ms. G was welcoming, energetic, and easy to talk with. She spoke about her daughter's growth and development with pride. The interview lasted one hour.

**Grace's Educator (Ms. Dunn).** Ms. Dunn was Grace's Spanish teacher during high school. She was a Caucasian woman in her 50s, held a masters degree, and had more than 20 years experience in education. Ms. Dunn had also known Ms. G and Grace personally since Grace was a baby. The interview was conducted in person at Grace's home immediately after Ms. G's interview. Ms. Dunn spoke highly of Grace's character, intellect, and motivation. She had no specific training related to working with adopted students. Ms. Dunn did mention that she had cousins who were adopted and that she has learned through experience about working with children from non-traditional families and diverse backgrounds. The interview lasted 40 minutes.

### **Case 8—Hannah**

Hannah was a 16-year-old junior in high school at the time of her interview. She was 6 months old at adoption. Hannah lived with her mother. She had one sister 23 years older than her who was the biological daughter of her father. Despite the significant age

difference, she and her sister were close. Her sister lived in the same city in a different neighborhood about 30 minutes away.

Hannah lived her entire life in the same neighborhood in a large northeastern city. According to the 2010 census the population of the town was 58,732 (8,637/square mile). The 2010 median age was 34 years old and the median household income (adjusted for inflation) was \$95,448.

Hannah attended the local public schools. From kindergarten through eighth grade, she attended one of nine local public elementary schools. The school's website indicated a population of 572 students in 2011-2012. This particular elementary school offered Mandarin Chinese to all students in grades K-6, and an option of Chinese or Spanish in grades 7 and 8. Hannah was presently attending the local public high school, which had a 2011-2012 population of 1,804 students. Approximately 11.6% of the students in the district were eligible for free/reduced-price meals. The racial demographics of the district were: 57.8% Caucasian, 9.6% Latin American, 6.7% African American, 18.3% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.0% Native American, and 7.6% Multi-race, Non-Hispanic (those of Latin American heritage were included with these numbers).

Hannah found out about the research from a friend who had participated in the study. She became interested and contacted the researcher herself to ask if she, too, could participate. She was interviewed in person by the researcher at her home in October 2011. Hannah expressed herself eloquently and succinctly. She was quite interested in the study. Hannah's answers were clear and direct, yet she did not seem to be rushing or holding back in any way. The interview lasted 1 hour 30 minutes.



**Hannah's Mother (Ms. H).** Ms. H was a Caucasian woman in her 60s. She was married to Hannah's father at the time of Hannah's adoption, but they divorced when she was about 7 years old. Ms. H held a Juris Doctor degree and was a retired civil lawyer. She was presently working as a business consultant and coach. Her interview was conducted immediately after Hannah's interview, also in person at her home. Ms. H seemed relaxed and comfortable during her interview. She spoke candidly and expressed a sincere interest in the research. The interview with Ms. H lasted one hour.

**Hannah's Educator (Ms. Cohen).** Ms. Cohen was Hannah's high school Spanish teacher as a freshman and again presently as a junior. She was a Caucasian woman in her 30s, held a masters degree, and had 13 years experience in education. The interview was conducted via Skype from Ms. Cohen's home in December 2011. Ms. Cohen was articulate and energetic. She had a particular interest in the cultural aspects of world languages, so she was enticed by the topic of the research study. In fact, she asked for a copy of the final report so she could share it with other CAs at her school. She had no specific training related to working with adopted students, but did mention that she had cousins who were interracially adopted, and had several other students that were CAs. The interview lasted 30 minutes.

#### **Case 9—Ivy**

Ivy was 16 years old at the time of the interview. She was a sophomore in high school. Ivy's parents were told she was 5 months old at adoption, but her doctors suspected she might have been younger than 5 months. Ivy was considered a special needs adoption due to numerous health conditions. She was interviewed in November 2011. Ivy lived with her mother and grandmother. Her father travelled for work most of the time, coming home to

visit once or twice a year. She had one sister, 4 years her junior, who was also adopted from China.

Ivy lived her entire life in the same neighborhood and city in the southeast. She spent most summers vacationing at a second home in the northeast with her mother, sister, and grandmother. According to the U.S. Census, the southeastern city in which she spent most of her childhood and attended school was in an urban area with a population of 76,068 (1,855/square mile). The median household income was \$41,471 (2006-2010).

Ivy attended a parochial school from kindergarten through eighth grade. She then transferred to the local public high school. The district's school profile for 2012 reported a total enrollment of 1,891 students. Approximately 23.3% of the students in the district were eligible for free/reduced-price meals with 23.5% reported as "minority." More detailed racial demographics for the school were not available, but the U.S. Census reported the city's racial demographics as follows: 75.1% Caucasian, 8.9% Latin American, 10.3% African American, 3.2% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.3% Native American, and 3.1% Mixed Race.

Ivy found out about the research study from her mother who saw the call for participants in the FCC adoption newsletter. She was interviewed via Skype from her home in November 2011. Ivy presented at the interview as a very intelligent, practical, young lady. She was incredibly articulate and mature. The interview lasted just over 2 hours.

**Ivy's Mother (Mrs. I).** Mrs. I was a Caucasian woman in her 60s. She was married to Ivy's father at the time of Ivy's adoption, and they were still married. Mrs. I held a masters degree and was employed in the airline industry for many years. She was presently working as a tourism professional, often securing travel plans for adoption-related travel

groups. Her interview was conducted in two sessions via Skype. It began the same day immediately after Ivy's interview and was completed the following afternoon. Mrs. I was talkative, personable, and gracious. She was proud to discuss her daughter's experiences and was very interested in the research. The interview lasted about 1 hour, 45 minutes.

**Ivy's Educator (Ms. Walters).** Ms. Walters was Ivy's English teacher as a freshman in high school. She was an African American woman in her 30s, held a masters degree, and had 16 years experience in education. Ms. Walters had known Ivy and Mrs. I personally for several years. Ms. Walters was Ivy's cheerleading team coach a few years prior to becoming her freshman English teacher. Thus, Ms. Walters was able to share about Ivy from both an academic and social perspective. The interview was conducted via Skype in December 2011. Ms. Walters was articulate. She spoke of Ivy as a conscientious, insightful, well-rounded student. She had no specific training related to working with adopted students. The interview lasted 20 minutes.

#### **Case 10—Jenna**

Jenna was a 16-year-old high school junior at the time of her interview. Jenna was 2 years, 6 months old at adoption. She lived with her mother, and was an only child. In addition to attending school, she worked part-time at a local bakery.

Jenna lived her entire life in the same neighborhood and town in the middle atlantic region of the US. It was originally a rural area but had become more residential in recent years. According to the U.S. Census, the 2010 population of the town was 2,248 with a median age of 45.4 years old. The 2010 median household income was \$74,000.

Jenna attended an independent Quaker school from preschool through eighth grade, a very small environment with only 33 students in her grade level cohort. She then moved on

to the local public high school, which had a 2011-2012 total student population in of 2,015. The national center for education statistics reported the demographics of the entire school district were: 96.14% Caucasian, 0.5% African American, 2.64% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% Native American, 0.6% Multi-race or Other Race (these figures included those of Latin American heritage).

Jenna found out about the research study through word-of-mouth from a friend who saw the call for participants in an FCC email correspondence. She was interviewed in person by the researcher at her home in November 2011. Jenna was talkative, personable, and seemed interested in the research. The interview lasted 2 hours.

**Jenna's Mother (Ms. J).** Ms. J was a Caucasian woman in her 60s who was single at the time of Jenna's adoption and was presently still single. She held a bachelors degree and worked in special education. Her interview was conducted immediately after Jenna's interview, also in person at her home. Prior to starting the interview Jenna and her mother shared a video slide show that Jenna had created for her mother's birthday. Jenna then sat in on Ms. J's interview for about 10 minutes, at which time she left to go out with a friend. It was apparent during these interactions that mother and daughter had a comfortable relationship with one another. Ms. J was welcoming and open about sharing her experiences. The interview lasted 45 minutes.

**Jenna's Educator (Mr. Drew).** Mr. Drew was Jenna's middle school science teacher. He was African American man in his 50s, held a masters degree, and had 11 years experience in education. The interview was conducted via Skype from his home in December 2011. During the interview, Mr. Drew was pleasant and helpful. He had no specific training or experience pertaining to working with adopted students. However, his

wife was Caucasian and they raised two mixed race sons in the same county where Jenna lives. Therefore, he was able to provide insight into some of the racial and cultural topics we discussed based upon his own personal experiences. The interview lasted about 45 minutes.

### **Case 11—Kayla**

Kayla was a 16-year-old high school junior at the time of her interview. Kayla was 16 months old at adoption. She lived with her mother, father, and 14-year-old brother who was adopted from Korea. Kayla also had an older sister who was 36 years old and married. She was the biological daughter of Kayla's father and was, interestingly, also half-Asian. In addition to attending school, Kayla worked part-time at a local history museum writing and performing historical plays.

Kayla lived her entire life in the same city in the midwest region of the US. According to the U.S. Census, the 2010 population of the town was 35,371 (5,995/square mile) with a median age of 37.4 years. The 2010 median household income was \$68,904.

Kayla attended the city's public elementary, middle, and high school. The state's department of education website reported the following 2011 demographics for the entire school district: 12.5% Caucasian, 2.0% Latin American, 83.4% African American, 1.2% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.4% Native American. The department of education reported that 60% of students in the district were eligible for free or reduced price lunch in 2011.

Kayla and her mother found out about the research study from a friend who heard about the study directly from the researcher. She was interviewed via Skype in November 2011. During the interview, Kayla seemed hesitant to share many details. At times, she appeared distracted by someone else in the room with her. The interviewer began with

asking her about her job at the museum which made her appear more relaxed. The researcher also asked Kayla if she was comfortable and interested in participating in the study, since her mother was the initial contact. Kayla confirmed her willingness and interest. She showed the most interest during the interview when discussing her friends, when she displayed a bright smile. The interview lasted 1 hour, 15 minutes.

**Kayla's Mother (Mrs. K).** Mrs. K was a Caucasian woman in her 50s who was married at the time of Kayla's adoption and was presently still married. She held a bachelors degree and was a commercial interior designer. Her interview was conducted the same evening as Kayla's interview, also via Skype. Mrs. K was convivial and smiled brightly during the interview. She was obviously proud of her daughter and pleased with her accomplishments. The interview lasted 50 minutes.

**Kayla's Educator (Mr. Kessler).** Mr. Kessler was Kayla's high school math teacher for both her freshman and now junior year. He was a Caucasian man in his 20s. He held a bachelors degree and had 7 years experience in education. The interview was conducted in February 2012 via telephone because Mr. Kessler did not have access to Skype. Although it was harder to establish a rapport with Mr. Kessler by telephone, an acceptable audio recording and transcription were able to be prepared. During the interview, Mr. Kessler emphasized that Kayla had an exceptionally strong work ethic. He had no specific training or experience pertaining to working with adopted students. The interview lasted 30 minutes.

## **Coding and Analysis Procedures**

### **Preliminary Procedures**

After interviews were professionally transcribed, the researcher initially reviewed hard copies of transcripts for accuracy while listening to the audio recordings. During this

review process, notes were made manually in the margins of the transcript of topics, comments, or thoughts that came up. This was a form of pre-coding, as described by Saldaña (2009).

### **Coding Methods**

The transcripts were imported into NVivo 9 (QSR International, 2011) a computer aided qualitative analysis software (CAQDAS) program. The transcripts were coded using the methods encouraged by Saldaña (2009) of descriptive, in vivo, and values coding. Descriptive coding, sometimes called topic coding, is described by Saldaña as summarizing “in a word or phrase—most often as a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data” (2009, p. 70), and is recommended for use by new researchers during first cycle coding. Descriptive codes are about the topics, not the content, of the interview data. In vivo coding is when the words of the participant are used to create the code. Saldaña recommends the use of in vivo codes in studies that attempt to honor the voice of the participant. Values coding is an “affective method” of coding that helps to reflect the participants’ attitudes, values, and beliefs about how they view the world.

Prior to beginning the process of coding, a provisional start list of 6 main tree codes and 33 subcodes and independent codes was created (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2004). These provisional codes were developed from the underlying theory, literature review, research questions, and interview protocols. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend between 12 and 60 provisional codes. By the end of the first cycle of coding 75 new codes were added, for a total of 114 codes. A code book was maintained throughout the coding process in which the researcher recorded the code name, date it was created, the name of the participant for which it was originally created, and a brief description of why the code

was needed or what precipitated the creation of the code. The researcher maintained a reflexivity journal and coding memos throughout the entire coding and analysis process.

After reviewing all transcripts and a first cycle of coding, the transcripts were reviewed a second time for deeper contextual meaning. The second cycle of coding involved multiple steps. First, the 20 codes with the highest frequency, by participant, were reviewed for content using NVivo. A spreadsheet of the most salient topics for each case was created and analyzed. Next, the 60 codes that were utilized in at least 8 sources and 10 total instances were each analyzed contextually. This provided a record of the most frequent topics by case (within case) and by code (across case).

The complete list of codes was examined for content, organization, and relevance to the research questions of the study. During this process several groups of codes were merged into new codes. Some codes were renamed. “Parent” or “tree” codes were created and codes were re-organized into a hierarchical structure. By the end of this process, the final code list totaled 87 codes. The code book was also used to record the above changes in the list of codes. This final code list is provided in Appendix Q.

### **Development of Themes**

Using an inductive, grounded theory approach, themes were derived empirically from the data in the 33 interview transcripts (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). King and Horrocks (2010) eloquently defined themes as “recurrent and distinctive features of participants’ accounts, characterizing particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 150). As a result of the processes of coding, cross-case analyses, and within-case analyses described above, the following nine overarching themes emerged:



1. **Good fortune and specialness.** Adoptees described a sense of feeling fortunate and/or being special, unique, or different from others and standing out in a positive way.
2. **Family bonding and appreciation.** Adoptees expressed being close with their families and/or appreciative of what their parent(s) had done for them.
3. **Self-confidence.** Adoptees were viewed by parents and educators as confident, outgoing, mature and exhibited evidence of positive self-concept.
4. **Strong work ethic.** Adoptees did well in school, some of them excelling, exhibiting high levels of motivation, determination, and tenacity; many recognized the value of an education. Adoptees also participated in numerous sports and extracurricular activities.
5. **Asian stereotypes.** Adoptees felt they did not fit the Asian stereotype of being good at or liking math or science.
6. **Resilience.** Parents and educators perceived traits of resilience in the adoptees. CAs exhibited adaptive behaviors that enabled them to be academically successful and well-adjusted socially and emotionally.
7. **Sense of belonging.** Adoptees tended to find a means by which to identify themselves as belonging to a particular group.
8. **Interest in a variety of cultures.** Adoptees articulated an interest in being exposed to diverse cultures. Many enjoyed traveling, learning about other cultures, and learning foreign languages.
9. **Fluctuating appreciation of origins.** Adoptees articulated a fluctuation in their level of interest in Chinese culture over time. As they grew older, adoptees were

beginning to make choices about their futures based upon their experiences of being Chinese and/or adopted.

### **Confirmability Audit**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest an inquiry, or confirmability audit to validate trustworthiness of a qualitative study. The auditor should be “someone who has sufficient experience to be trustworthy, whose judgments can be accepted as valid, and who is a disinterested party. . . sufficiently close in peer status to the auditee that one does not dominate the other” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 326). Thus, the researcher obtained a colleague to conduct a confirmability audit of the data analysis, particularly since researcher bias was a potential issue. An auditor with previous experience conducting and auditing qualitative doctoral research was selected to conduct an audit of the analysis and themes. The auditor was an elementary school principal with a doctorate in instructional leadership and 39 years experience in education, including 15 years as a classroom teacher. For the audit, 13 codes were selected from the code list, including at least one code representing each of the themes that emerged. The auditor was provided with the five research questions, the code list with definitions, the list of themes just discussed, and 127 partial samples of interview transcripts from each of the three sources. After the audit process was complete, the auditor and researcher agreed on 97.6% of the 127 coded samples.

### **PASCI Results**

As themes were developed, selected PASCI subscale scores were compared to the within case themes that emerged. This was done in an effort to corroborate the resultant themes and reduce researcher bias. The PASCI scores were used in a qualitative manner to confirm the results of the study. The average scores for 8 of the 9 subscales were higher than

the norms for female college freshmen. The normed data for the Academic Ability (AA) subscale were not available. The individual subscale scores for each participant are provided in Table 6. A higher subscale score means the individual is stronger in that facet of self-concept. Table 7 provides an overview of how each of the PAsCI subscale scores was associated with each of the themes.

Table 6

*Results of the PAsCI by Participant*

SUBSCALES	Amy	Brianna	Caitlyn	Didi	Emily	Fang	Grace	Hannah	Ivy	Jenna	Kayla	Average Score
Self-regard (SR)	32	29	27	26	35	28	17	31	26	26	35	<b>28</b>
Social Acceptance (SA)	19	23	24	18	27	26	16	21	24	25	34	<b>23</b>
Academic Ability (AA)	30	29	26	13	33	24	22	21	33	21	32	<b>26</b>
Verbal Ability (VA)	27	24	25	17	24	20	24	26	33	19	33	<b>25</b>
Math Ability (MA)	24	25	9	28	15	13	22	18	13	18	25	<b>19</b>
Physical Appearance (PAP)	23	21	20	16	34	29	20	22	11	21	34	<b>23</b>
Physical Ability (PAB)	28	31	27	23	32	29	14	29	15	19	32	<b>25</b>
Parental Acceptance (PA)	34	31	32	23	35	29	32	34	16	35	35	<b>31</b>
<sup>a</sup> Social Anxiety (SAX)	18	25	30	15	35	30	12	33	31	25	27	<b>26</b>

*Note.* Range of scores per subscale: Highest possible score = 35, Middle score = 20, Lowest possible score = 5.

<sup>a</sup>A lower SAX score indicates more social anxiety, whereas a higher SAX score indicates less social anxiety and stronger self-concept.

Table 7

*Association Between Themes and PASCI Subscale Scores*

Theme Number	Title of Theme	Associated PASCI Subscales
1	Good fortune and specialness	Self-Regard (SR) Social Acceptance (SA)
2	Family bonding and appreciation	Parental Acceptance (PA)
3	Self-confidence	Self-Regard (SR) Social Anxiety (SAX)
4	Strong work ethic	Academic Ability (AA)
5	Asian stereotypes	Math Ability (MA) Verbal Ability (VA)
6	Resilience	N/A
7	Sense of belonging	Social Acceptance (SA) Social Anxiety (SAX)
8	Interest in a variety of cultures	N/A
9	Fluctuating appreciation of origins	N/A

*Note.* The Physical Appearance (PAP) and Physical Ability (PAB) subscale scores were not utilized in this study.

The researcher then parsed out the highest and lowest PASCI subscale scores for each CA and compared them with the themes associated with each adoptee participant case analysis. Each adoptee's two lowest scoring subscale scores and two highest scoring subscale scores are noted in Table 8. In some cases, there were more than two subscales listed in the highest or lowest categories because the scores were equal.

Table 8

*Comparison of High/Low PASCI Scores by Participant*

Adoptee Pseudonym	Highest PASCI Subscale Scores	Lowest PASCI Subscale Scores
Amy	Parental Acceptance (34) Self-Regard (32)	Social Anxiety (18) Social Acceptance (19)
Brianna	Parental Acceptance (31) Physical Ability (31)	Physical Appearance (21) Social Acceptance (23)
Caitlyn	Parental Acceptance (32) Social Anxiety (30)	Math Ability (9) Physical Appearance (20)
Didi	Math Ability (28) Self-Regard (26)	Academic Ability (13) Social Anxiety (15)
Emily	Parental Acceptance (35) Self-Regard (35) Social Anxiety (35)	Math Ability (15) Verbal Ability (24)
Fang	Social Anxiety (30) Parental Acceptance (29) Physical Ability (29) Physical Appearance (29)	Math Ability (13) Verbal Ability (20)
Grace	Parental Acceptance (32) Verbal Ability (24)	Social Anxiety (12) Physical Ability (14)
Hannah	Parental Acceptance (34) Social Anxiety (33)	Math Ability (18) Social Acceptance (21) Academic Ability (21)
Ivy	Academic Ability (33) Verbal Ability (33)	Physical Appearance (11) Math Ability (13)
Jenna	Parental Acceptance (35) Self-Regard (26)	Math Ability (18) Verbal Ability (19) Physical Ability (19)
Kayla	Parental Acceptance (35) Self-Regard (35)	Math Ability (25) Social Anxiety (27)

*Note.* Actual PASCI Scores are in parenthesis (see Table 6 for all subscale scores).

## **Discussion of Themes**

In this section, each of the nine themes is discussed in detail. For each theme, evidence from the data is presented to support the pervasiveness of the topic. The evidence are in the form of direct quotes, paraphrased statements, the researcher's interpretations of the data from field notes and coding memos, and PASCI subscale scores. Where appropriate, the participants are identified by their pseudonyms, except in cases where the sensitivity of the topic justifies total confidentiality.

Each theme will be discussed in order. First, a description of each theme is presented. Support from the codes informing the theme will be provided from the data of all participants—adoptees, parents, and educators. Then each theme will be summarized in relation to the research question(s) addressed. After all themes are discussed, a summary is provided at the end of the chapter.

### **Theme 1: Good Fortune and Specialness**

There was a theme of being thankful to family for the opportunities and positive things in their lives. Some expressed wanting to give back to others as a result of their good fortune, or claimed they had compassion for others. There was also a related and intertwined theme of feeling special, unique, or standing out from others in a positive way. This first theme was supported by data that were coded under the following codes: activities/adoption activities, adoption/personal story, fortunate, giving back to others, identity/adoptive, personality traits/positive attitude, school/advice to educators, uniqueness, and values or beliefs/adoption.

**Good fortune.** Amy talked about how her doctor told her she probably would have died from malnutrition if she hadn't been adopted because of a cleft lip and palate. She said



she was very fortunate that her parents adopted her because they helped save her life. Amy said, "My parents are literally my heroes." Mrs. A also mentioned several times how fortunate she felt to have adopted Amy and have her in their family. She said Amy had been a tremendous blessing to her and her family. It was evident both Amy and her mother attributed their good fortune and happiness to their faith, and expressed their gratitude to God. Mrs. A said of Amy, "Sometimes, you're out and about and people say, when she's a baby especially, 'Oh, she's so lucky!' No, we're the lucky ones. Just watching her grow up and smiling and making us smile, and the love she gives."

Emily talked about how she tried to encourage people about adoption by telling them her story. She said she was very appreciative of where she ended up and that she doesn't take things for granted. She said she often thinks about where she used to be as compared to where she is now, and is happy that she has had a loving family and the opportunity to obtain a good education.

Ivy, too, expressed feeling fortunate. She said that one thing that bothers her is when other people express feeling sorry for her when they discover she is adopted from China. Ivy felt like she was fortunate to have been adopted into her family and to live here in America. She said she will have better opportunities in life because she was adopted. Thus, she gets upset when others pity her. Mrs. I spoke a lot about Ivy's empathy and compassion for others, particularly those that are poor, disadvantaged, or sick. In the same way, Kayla expressed a genuine thankfulness that she was adopted and provided a better life, with more opportunities than she would have had in China. Jenna had a positive attitude about being adopted saying, "Take pride that you're adopted. It's nothing to be like embarrassed about or

ashamed of. And it's a fortunate thing in your life and to be considered as one of the lucky ones."

A few of the adoptees specifically mentioned wanting to give back to others because of the good fortune they have had in their lives. There was a common realization among the CAs of their own good fortune, and a resulting desire to want to help others in need. Amy said she wanted to give back to others simply because her parents gave her so much. This was one reason she decided to pursue a career in nursing. Jenna was also thinking about becoming a nurse. She said she wants to work with the elderly or the homeless, and wants "to make a difference in someone else's life." Jenna's teacher, Mr. Drew described how kind and gentle Jenna was with the disabled adults they visited through their school outreach program.

Caitlyn talked about her trips back to China and how she realized that the children in the orphanages were not afforded the same opportunities as she. After spending time there in the orphanages, she realized that she was very lucky to have been adopted into a good family and to be receiving a good education. Similarly, Hannah described her mission trip to South America over the previous summer where she had to live in a poverty stricken village taking bucket baths and using latrines. That experience made her realize how lucky she was to have been adopted from an orphanage, where there was probably no heat or hot water, and brought to the United States to live with her family. Just like Jenna, Hannah said, "Being adopted, it makes me want to make a difference in someone else's life."

**Specialness.** CAs also articulated feeling special, unique, or different from others in an affirming way. Almost every reference coded under "Uniqueness" came from the adoptees' responses to the question, "What have been some of the best things for you about

growing up as and being a CA?” Brianna said the best thing was “Being different and interesting. I guess I’ve always enjoyed the fact that I’m a little different from other people. That I’m not like everyone else, that it’s a good thing.” Brianna also said, “I guess having a story is interesting to me. And I think others find that interesting.” Ms. Lynch confirmed how Brianna had a unique style and was not afraid to be her own person impervious of the pressures to fit in with the crowd.

Didi expressed feeling that she was wanted more because her mother chose to adopt and raise her on her own as an older widowed woman. She said being adopted is “special”. It also prompted others to want to hear her story because it is different. Surprisingly, Didi even said she felt unique because she looked different from most of the Caucasian American and Norwegian friends and family. Even Mrs. Peterson pointed out the fact that Didi wanted to someday support and take care of her mother the way her mother took care of her. She commented that that is not the typical thing she hears from most teenagers.

Amy articulated that she feels special, is proud of her story, and views being different in a positive light because she has become more accepting of others’ differences, as well. Ivy reiterated this same feeling. She said her exposure to many other adoptees gave her a better perspective of others, and that she also likes having an interesting story to tell. Fang said, “It’s nice having a different presence...” Caitlyn discussed the uniqueness of her family, which includes biological and adoptive children spanning 30 years in age. She said it was what “set her apart” from her classmates.

Jenna viewed it from a different perspective by agreeing that being adopted is indeed special, but she did not advocate treating adoptees differently because of it. She felt adoptees should be treated exactly as biological children are treated. Jenna felt that adoptees are not

fragile just because they are adopted. Many other adoptees and parents also expressed that adoptees should be treated like any other child. Adoptees particularly felt this way in relation to school.

To summarize, there was a common theme among adoptees that they were fortunate to have been provided better opportunities in life than they would have probably had in China, delighted in the fact that they somehow stood out from their peers, and often expressed the desire to want to “pay it forward” to others because of their own good fortune. However, they did not feel they were fragile in any way because of having been adopted, but rather wanted to be viewed and treated like any other teenager or young adult.

This first theme of good fortune and specialness addressed research question one on the perception of CAs experiences at home and school. There was evidence that CAs felt fortunate and were enjoying many positive experiences, particularly in the context of home. It also addressed research question two related to how the CAs perceived their life experiences developmentally. CAs showed evidence of wanting to be of service to others in their present daily lives and future careers.

## **Theme 2: Family Bonding and Appreciation**

One of the most pervasive of the nine themes was that of family closeness. Adoptees expressed having close relationships with their parents and other family members. Even the few who were not especially close with siblings or parents still expressed respect and love for their families. Many also possessed an inherent admiration of the concept of family. This was consistent across cases and within cases. The expressions of the adoptees were mirrored by the parents and even some of the educators. Theme two was supported by data that were identified by the following codes: activities/adoption related, adoption/questions, bonding,

identity/family, relationships (family, extended family, parents, and siblings), school/advice to educators, and values or beliefs/family.

The pervasiveness of this theme was supported by the results of the PASCI subscale for Parental Acceptance (PA). Across cases, the average overall score for the PA subscale was 31 out of a possible 35—the highest average of all nine subscales. Eight of the participants scored above 30 for this subscale. Within cases, the PA subscale score was the highest or next to highest subscale score for nine of the adoptee participants (refer to Table 8). The PA subscale results strongly reinforced the words of the participants.

When asked about their family relationships, the majority of the adoptees confirmed they were close to their parents and siblings. These comments were consistent regardless of age, gender, adoptive status of siblings, or marital status of parents. Many of the adoptees said they enjoyed family times together such as family dinners, traditions, holiday get-togethers, sports, hobbies, shopping, and travel. Many also said they would like to adopt their own children when they are older. When discussing relationships with their parents, words such as “respect,” “honor,” and “supportive” were used to describe them.

Amy described the tremendous amount of love she has for her family. Mrs. A said that Amy “is the best thing that ever happened to me and my husband and her brother.” Even Ms. Duncan, Amy’s teacher mentioned that she was very close to her family. Ms. Duncan commented that she didn’t think Amy had any feeling of something missing in her life or identity because she was adopted. She felt that Amy’s parents loved her unconditionally and that it made a big difference for Amy. She said, “Amy is very secure, in the way only children who have been truly loved are secure.”

Brianna and Caitlyn also agreed that their large family was very close—adopted and biological children alike. Both Ms. Lynch, Brianna’s teacher, and Ms. Chase, Caitlyn’s teacher agreed that both girls felt as much a part of their family as their older siblings who were biologically born to their parents. Mrs. Lynch said, “Aside from how she looks, she’s so fully integrated into the – into her family and feels such a sense of belonging and happiness and strength. It’s pretty amazing.” Both Ms. Lynch and Ms. Chase also agreed that family always came first for the girls, even before friends or extracurricular activities. This was a characteristic that they found very uncommon among teenagers.

The notion of bonding was mentioned repeatedly by parents during their interviews. Mrs. D said she was instantly bonded to Didi in China. Didi’s counselor, Ms. Peterson even spoke about the strong bond she observed between Didi and Mrs. D, and how atypical it was for a teenager:

That has not been my experience with adopted kids in the past that she is just so ... everything is about her mother and how much she cares deeply about this woman that adopted her. . . .the bond between them is really, really strong . . . she just has this incredible bond.

Mrs. B talked about bonding with her adopted children and how it was just the same as with her biological children:

We’ve had both. I don’t think you feel any differently. I can remember being a little surprised when I got photos back of Caitlyn, some of the first photos. She was clearly an Asian baby in the photos because I was pretty convinced the umbilical cord was attached from me to her. She was just an unbelievable gift to have, a baby at that age, like when I was 41 or something and my kids were in sixth, tenth and twelfth grade.

Even the few CAs who were not especially close with family members still spoke of parental love, support, and close family ties. One adoptee said she wasn't very close to her family, but then went on to say, "I have a good family, good friends who support me. I'm happy, I like where I am." When she was asked to say why she stated she had a good family, she responded "they're supportive of me with what I do. . . ." Two of the adoptees said that their parents were very emotionally supportive of them, despite family issues or lack of outward physical affection between them. They talked about the trust between them and their parents and that they were able to go to their parents when there was an issue to talk about. Throughout all 22 parent and adoptee interviews, there was no mention of serious family conflict or excessive arguing beyond the ordinary teenage conflicts over homework or similar issues.

The following statements made by some of the CAs provide evidence of an inherent admiration of the concept of family. When Caitlyn was in elementary school, she gave a speech to her peers announcing the decision of her family to adopt her younger sister. She recalled starting her presentation with the following statement:

Families are really unique. They come in all different shapes and sizes, and while it's very cool to say, "I have mom's eyes and my dad's hair," when it comes down to it, families are really brought together by love.

Caitlyn also gave profound advice for other adoptees about the meaning of family:

For anyone who's adopted, embrace it. You've a lot to teach other people about love. You've a lot more to give than you actually think you do. I think a lot of people sell themselves short these days, which is too bad, but again, I think being adopted, you have a chance...these days, adoption is a lot more prevalent in our society, but you

still have a chance to really show people that love isn't a biological inherent thing from parent to child because of blood relation. That's not what it is at all. I think your experience being adopted differs. . . It is really special. Your parents went through something that a lot of parents are still afraid to do. Unfortunately, I think a lot of parents are still really wary of it. Be proud of them, your parents. They did something that other parents are still not totally understanding of.

When Fang was asked what family means to her, she replied "Family means strong connection between people like that you'll care about forever, no matter what your situation is, and they are people who will always be there for you." To the same question, Ivy responded, "Some people say that blood is thicker than water and since I am not blood related, I don't think that. I'm just like if you really care about someone and love them and . . . that can overcome anything." Jenna said, "Family is important. Like, it doesn't really matter if you're blood. They love you, they're there for you. It's family."

As would be expected, there were comments from adoptees and parents pertaining to the struggles between parents and children during the adolescent years, as well. Nonetheless, even while discussing the struggles and hard times, there was still an underlying theme of love and support. For example, one parent whose daughter had struggled for years with depression, anxiety, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) said, "I would adopt again in a second." She obviously wanted her daughter to be happy and even though she was the source of a lot of worry to her at present, she would still choose to do it all over again. It was a testament to how important her daughter was to her. She went on to give the following advice to prospective adoptive parents:



I think that a lot of people adopt and they think they're going to get this cute little baby and everything's going to be wonderful and rosy, and for the most part it is and I'm so grateful I adopted and everything, but there are problems that are going to occur and when you start the whole process you have to have in mind that everything might not be perfect and that you'll – you know it's more than just a sweet little baby, type of thing.

To summarize, theme two was a pervasive theme of family bonding and appreciation. Most adoptees expressed being close with their parents, siblings, or extended families. They spoke of their parents with love, respect, and admiration. The results of the PA subscale of the PASCI robustly supported this theme. Most of those who had siblings talked about the relationships as close, regardless of whether they were adopted or biologically born. The few who were not particularly close with siblings still confirmed that there was an atmosphere of mutual respect with minimal disagreement. Adoptees also articulated an awareness of the meaning of family with a depth of insight beyond their years. Parents spoke often of strong bonding and the equivalence of adopted parent-child relationships with that of blood-related children. Educators also admired the levels of family bonding and dedication to family they observed in these young women.

This second theme of family bonding and appreciation addressed research question one on the perception of CAs experiences at home. There was evidence that CAs were happy in their families, had positive family relationships, and appreciated their home lives. This finding was consistent within and across cases. Thus, this theme also addressed research questions three, four, and five. There was agreement within and across cases that CAs were strongly bonded with and appreciated their families.

### **Theme 3: Self-confidence**

Adoptees were viewed as confident, outgoing, mature, and welcoming, and exhibited evidence of positive self-concept. This theme manifested itself by comments made by adoptees pertaining to their social relationships and personality traits. The theme was supported by parents' and educators' comments, as well as the researcher's personal observations during interviews. It was reinforced further by the results of the SR subscale of the PASCI. Across cases, the average of the SR subscale for all 11 adoptees was the second-highest subscale score of 28 out of 35 points, with 4 of the 11 adoptees scoring above 30. Within cases, the SR subscale score was the highest or next to highest score for 5 of the adoptee participants (refer to Table 8). The SR subscale results strongly support this theme. Theme three was also informed by the data coded at: identity/social, and personality traits (at the subcodes of mature, outgoing, and welcoming).

Amy said she was proud of being adopted and liked to tell her story to others. She mentioned that her involvement in dance made her self-confident; Amy's educator, Ms. Duncan agreed. Ms. Duncan also said Amy was confident and well-liked by her peers. In her words, Ms. Duncan said Amy was "... sure of herself and she knows what makes her comfortable and what doesn't make her comfortable. She's always direct. She doesn't beat around the bush." Ms. Lynch noted that Brianna was not afraid to be herself or to express her own style. She said Brianna was not caught up in the "girls' world drama." She said Brianna did not socialize in class much, but rather focused on getting her work done. Ms. Lynch said, "She's very – she seems to be very confident to me. In part because she doesn't, worry – well, I say she doesn't worry, about what other people think." In a similar manner, Ms. Peterson, indicated that Didi didn't allow herself to be pulled into the negative things

that went on at school, even if it meant she would be isolated from her peers. Ms. Chase remarked that it seemed being adopted was “peripheral” to Caitlyn’s overall identity. She described Caitlyn as being responsible, mature, and of “good moral fiber.” She advocated for herself and wouldn’t easily tolerate it when she felt her friends were making poor choices.

Although Fang’s SR scale on the PASCI was not one of the highest scores for her, she exuded a level of confidence during her interview that was beyond her 16 years. Ms. Sullivan described Fang as charismatic, assertive, with strong leadership qualities and good interpersonal skills. She said of Fang, “You know, in any kind of situation like that, that involved bringing kids together to work together as a group, you could always count on her. She’s a real leader in that regard.”

Mrs. I talked about how confident Ivy was. She explained how Ivy was able to stand up in front of an entire audience of educated adults and give speeches at international conferences. Ivy also participated in theater and performed as a professional actress. Paradoxically, Ivy did not talk about these activities much during her interview. Likewise, Ms. Walters said that Ivy was well-spoken and confident. Ms. Cohen said that Hannah had a lot of spunk to her personality and was not afraid to express her opinions: “I think that her force of personality and her willingness to express opinions and her determination are great strengths.” Ms. Cohen described Hannah as self-confident and not afraid to push the envelope or ask challenging questions in class.

To summarize theme three, adoptees exhibited high levels of confidence and self-worth. Many of the educators and parents described characteristics that pointed to strength of character in these young ladies, such as: being sure of themselves, not being affected by responses of their peers, willing to express their own opinions, and exhibiting traits of

responsibility, maturity, assertiveness, and fluency. The word “confident” was used repeatedly when the educators were describing the adoptees. A text query of the word “confident” in NVivo revealed it was used by 8 of the 11 educators a total of 16 times. The researcher’s personal observations of the adoptees during interviews were consistent with what the educators and parents described. In many cases, the adoptees exuded poise during their interviews. Ironically, this theme was not supported by the actual words of the adoptee participants. Adoptees were more apt to discuss their families, friends, and activities than their accomplishments or strengths. However, the results of the PASCI-SR subscale did support this theme.

This third theme of self-confidence addressed research question one about how CAs perceived the experience of being a CA in different contexts. Although the adoptees did not expressly say they felt confident and self-assured, the results of the PASCI-SR subscale did support the theme. This theme also addressed research questions three and four on how parents and educators viewed the social adjustment of CAs. There was evidence from educators that CAs possessed a strong sense of self at school and in social circles. Finally, theme three addressed research question five regarding how the perspectives of the CAs compared to those of the parents and educators. The PASCI results indirectly represented that CAs regarded themselves positively. The parents’ and educators’ observations confirmed this.

#### **Theme 4: Strong Work Ethic**

Adoptees did well in school, some of them excelling, exhibiting high levels of motivation, determination, and tenacity; many also recognized the value of an education. This was an evident pattern, even for those who did not particularly like school or struggled

with learning disabilities. Adoptees also participated in numerous sports and extracurricular activities. This pattern was consistent both within and across cases. The strong work ethic adoptees possessed was almost unanimously confirmed by parents and educators alike. The overall average PASCI Academic Ability subscale score was 26. It was not the highest scoring subscale for most of the adoptees, but was above the mid-range score of 20. (It is noted, however, that the AA subscale score is more representative of the CAs' perceived academic ability and not their actual effort in school.) Theme four was informed by data that were coded under the following codes: activities/other, identity/academic, personality traits/mature, school (subcodes of academics, adjustment, and feelings), sports, strengths, strong work ethic, and values or beliefs about school.

**High levels of motivation and determination.** Regarding school performance, all of the CAs reportedly performed either average or above average academically. Of the 11 adoptees, 10 were in honors, advanced placement (AP) or international baccalaureate (IB) classes in high school. A text search of the transcripts and memos in NVivo resulted in 44 references to the word "honors" in over 20 sources. A similar text search of the abbreviations IB or AP resulted in 66 references across 18 sources. At least three of the CAs said they were in all honors classes. There were essentially no comments regarding any of the CAs doing poorly at school. Even those who said they struggled because of attention issues or learning disabilities still managed to be successful at school.

In most cases, the CAs were unassuming about their own academic achievement. However, the educators and parents were not. Educators described extremely high levels of motivation and determination at school. Ms. Duncan remembered Amy as reflective, with an outstanding work ethic and ability to focus. Ms. Dunn admired Grace as a "top 2% student"

who was brilliant, capable, focused, determined, and resilient. She said Grace always did her homework and always participated. Mrs. G said Grace was internally motivated to do well and pushed herself in school. Mrs. G described how Grace became interested in Russia and took the initiative to learn the Cyrillic alphabet on her own during the summer. She said of Grace's determination, "Academically, as I said, if anything I have to tell her, 'Don't be so hard on yourself, take it easy. You don't need a 100, you know.'" Grace agreed by saying, "I am actually probably tougher on my grades and myself than my mom is on me." Grace articulated that her motivation comes from an innate "Asian Standard," but also expressed she wanted to do well because it helps her to become a better person.

Both Mrs. K and Mrs. I lauded their daughters for maintaining a 4.0 average in honors, AP, and IB programs. Despite Kayla's claim of disliking math, Mr. Kessler said that she consistently had the highest average in his pre-calculus class. Ms. Walters described Ivy as a dedicated, capable, and talented student who was able to balance a heavy work load in the IB program in addition to numerous extracurricular activities. Mrs. I said that Ivy was diagnosed with visual and auditory processing delays, but she was still able to maintain this level of accomplishment without any special services at school. In fact, Ivy was inducted into the national honor society one year early as a sophomore.

Mrs. H described Hannah as a consistently solid, comfortable, and strong student. Ms. Cohen explained Hannah jumped from a level 3 honors Spanish last year to a level 4 Advanced Spanish this year by working on the language on her own. Hannah decided to go to South America over the summer and immersed herself in the language there. Ms. Cohen said of Hannah's resolve to do well in Spanish, "The very fact that she made the leap and

took the initiative to do it [travel to South America] is a testament to her motivation or desire to really master Spanish.”

When Jenna spoke about academics, she joked that she liked to include all the letters of the alphabet on her report card, so the other letters wouldn’t feel left out. When asked what motivated her, she proclaimed that material rewards, such as a new pair of shoes, would encourage her to do well. However, even Mr. Drew noticed tenacity in Jenna. He said,

She was also willing to improve her work. Like if I returned a report to her, and I said, “This section needs a little bit more beef and I’ll give you until tomorrow to do that.” there wasn’t [the response from her that indicated] “Well, I’ll just keep the grade that I’ve got.” She actively worked to improve herself in that respect.

Mr. Drew also said Jenna was always honest when she didn’t come through on something at school—she never lied about it. Ms. J described Jenna as determined. Although Jenna joked about her grades and school, there was an indication that she really did care about her progress. She said the best thing about school this year was earning all As and Bs on her report card for the first time. She recalled with pride how she had worked very hard to improve her grades this year in preparation for college:

Okay. So, yeah, I went to clinic every day ... not every day. We have clinic on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tuesday I go to French, Thursdays I go to math. I try to like really work hard on the grades that needed to be worked on, and I did it!

Despite the modesty of the CAs to boast of their own efforts, comments made by adoptees reinforced this theme of a strong work ethic. The following are statements made by some of the adoptees about their school work.

Amy said, “I always do it to the best of my ability, because why do something if you're not going to try your hardest.”

Fang said, “You have homework, you either do it or you don’t. But I always was the person who always had to do it.”

Grace said, “I’m not quite sure anyone can really say they like doing work, but if I’m going to be doing it then I’m going to try my hardest and make sure something good comes out of it.”

Hannah said, “I’m very self-motivating. My parents don’t – they definitely want me to do well, but it’s not like they’re the type of parents who would make me sit down and do homework for four hours on a Saturday.”

Didi had learning delays due to a lack of language acquisition prior to her adoption. When she first came to the US at the age of three she was tested in Chinese and only knew about 20 words. So, at the age of three, she had to begin learning to speak a language for the very first time. Didi talked about the ups and downs she experienced in school through the years. In her opinion, there were years that she did poorly, and years that she did better. She explained that it has improved as she has gotten older, eventually taking some AP and honors classes and achieving a high GPA. Didi is now bilingual in English and Norwegian and also took Chinese in high school. Mrs. D felt that although learning did not come easily to Didi, she always worked extremely hard in school for her grades. Mrs. Peterson said that Didi’s



teachers felt that there is even more growth to come because she is still catching up.

**The value of education.** A number of adoptees verbalized the value of getting a good education. Caitlyn talked a lot about education and school, saying that education is about the entire package, not just the academics. She loved school and enjoyed learning. She felt that a good education is extremely important. At her schools, she was able to select from many diverse course offerings, and she valued that. At one point, she commented, “If you're going to spoil the kids, I would say spoil them with a good education.” Caitlyn was thankful for the good schools she has been able to attend. She said:

School has always been great. I’ve always loved it. I’m an education studies minor.

Both my parents are teachers as well. So, I value a good education and I enjoy studying about education in general, not even just a specific subject. I’ve always really liked school, really have.

Emily, who struggled in school with ADHD and anxiety issues, still talked positively about what school meant to her, saying, “It just means that I’ve been given the opportunity to learn and to better my future [to be] as successful as I can . . .” Emily commented that she would love to go to a larger university, but that she chose the smaller one she’s in because she knows she needs more one-on-one attention from her professors. She felt strongly that she needs to know and be known by her professors because of her learning and emotional struggles. She also shared her appreciation of the money her parents spent to send her to school and said she takes advantage of that by trying to do her best, because “I know that’s what parents want for their children so it’s like why disrespect them and destroy what I guess their simple goals and wishes are.”

Fang is a hard-working and self-motivated student, but she does not particularly like the academics. Mrs. F agreed that Fang is less interested in the academics now that she is in high school. However, she still does well in school and participates in sports and other activities because she knows it is important for her future success in college and a career. Hannah was thinking about going into teaching for a future career because she felt very affected by her teachers at school. Hannah said, “School, yeah, school has been important to me. I’m going to a really good school.”

**Sports and extracurricular activities.** Adoptees were also very involved in sports and other extracurricular activities. Almost all of the adoptees participated in some form of sport or athletic activity. A few were three-season varsity athletes; some were team captains. In addition to sports, many also participated in clubs, community service, theatre, music, and the arts. It was evident that they were a group of well-rounded, active young ladies. Table 9 lists the activities in which each of the 11 adoptees spoke of participating.

Table 9

*Summary of Extracurricular Activities*

Adoptee Pseudonym	Sports/Athletics	Other Activities
Amy	Dance, soccer	Piano, clarinet, guitar, chorus, theatre
Brianna	Swimming, soccer, tennis	Art
Caitlyn	Swimming, soccer, tennis	Student tour guide
Didi	Volleyball, tennis, lacrosse	Piano, community service though church
Emily	Cross-country, dance, basketball, soccer	Piano, national art honor society, community service
Fang	Basketball, tennis, boxing, soccer, Chinese dance.	Theatre, acapela chorus, Chinese
Grace		Violin
Hannah	Basketball, track, volleyball	
Ivy	Cheerleading, dance, soccer	Robotics, future problem solvers, theatre, guitar, Chinese, professional acting
Jenna	Basketball, cross-country, field hockey, lacrosse.	Girl scouts, SADD, theatre, piano, art, community service club, Chinese language and Chinese dance
Kayla	Dance, gymnastics, karate black belt, track	Hebrew school, musical theatre

To summarize theme four, adoptees possessed a strong work ethic in school and other activities. Adoptees did well in school, exhibiting tenacity, determination, and motivation. This was consistent even for those who struggled in school because of learning difficulties or for those who proclaimed to not like school. Some expressed an appreciation of the value of a good education, despite the hard work required. Many also participated outside the classroom in numerous sports and extracurricular activities.

This fourth theme of strong work ethic addressed research question three pertaining to how parents perceive their child's academic experiences, and research question four regarding how educators view the academic adjustment of CAs. There was evidence from educators and parents alike that they viewed the academic success and adjustment of the adoptees quite positively. Finally, theme four addressed research question five on how the perspectives of the CAs compare to those of the parents and educators. The adoptees did not speak about their own academic successes as much as the educators and parents did, but the results of the Academic Ability subscale on the PASCI support the notion that adoptees perceived themselves as possessing good academic ability. The PASCI—AA scores implied that CAs perceived themselves as high in academic ability, and the educators' as well as parents' observations strongly confirmed this.

### **Theme 5: Asian Stereotypes**

Adoptees felt they did not fit the Asian stereotype of being good at or liking math or science. Most of these expressions came directly from the adoptees. In response to the question, "What were some of the worst things about school for you?" four of the CAs said math or science. In most cases, the adoptees' statements were confirmed by the educators. This theme was informed by data coded at the following codes: identity/academic,

identity/racial, school (subcodes of academics, advice to educators, bad things, feelings, and good things), stereotypes, strengths, and values or beliefs/school.

The PASCI Math Ability subscale scores also helped to substantiate this theme. Referring to Table 6, the MA score of 19 was the lowest overall average subscale score, even though the overall average score for the MA subscale was one point higher than the norm for that scale. The MA scores ranged from a low of 9 to a high of 25. The MA score was one of the lowest subscale scores for 7 of the 11 adoptees. Only one of the adoptees scored highest on the MA subscale score. Incongruously, that participant's educator felt she was actually stronger in English and the languages than in math. However, it is worth noting throughout this discussion that the MA subscale is a measure of the student's perceived mathematical ability, not their actual performance or achievement in math.

Comparing the PASCI-MA scores to the verbal ability (VA) subscale scores, nine of the adoptees felt their verbal ability was better than their math ability; two scored highest on VA. Many of the CAs spoke of being better in English and the languages than in math and science; they also indicated enjoying those subjects more. Two of the CAs mentioned being in honors language classes, such as French or Spanish. Five of them were taking more than one foreign language.

In general, the seven CAs who rated themselves lowest on the MA subscale claimed that their best or favorite subjects were history, English, foreign languages, or art. In most cases, the educators agreed with their proclaimed strengths. For the same seven individuals, all rated themselves higher on the VA subscale than the MA subscale.

Caitlyn was one of those who repeatedly expressed not fitting into the Asian stereotype of being good at math and science:

Yes, I consider myself a pretty good student. I do well in my classes. I struggle with the subjects that I've always struggled with, so that's no surprise. Every time I have to take one of those classes, I expect it, and shockingly, as much as there are Asian stereotypes which I noticed your questionnaire had questions about math and science, not my thing. Those are the subjects I really struggle with and math especially. I've always struggled with that.

Ms. Chase agreed that she remembered Caitlyn enjoyed English, history, and humanities courses more than math or science. However, she wondered whether Caitlyn actually had a real weakness in those areas or just a perceived weakness. As Caitlyn's biology teacher, she said Caitlyn did well in her class. She commented that perhaps it might have been more of a lack of interest in those subjects than an actual weakness.

Fang discussed how she liked math but didn't think she was good at it. She talked about taking an honors level math in middle school, not doing as well as she had hoped in it, then deciding to go back to standard level math after that. She also talked about struggling in math again last year, and working hard with a tutor. Fang described her friends' expectations that she should be good in math and science, but how they are her two worst subjects. She said it was sometimes the butt of jokes with her friends:

I'll joke about that, too. I'll be like – people will be like, “Why are you doing bad in Chemistry?” and I'll be like, “I'm doing pretty badly.” And they be like, “What are you talking about, you're Asian.” “Yeah, I'm Asian and they're my two worst subjects [math and science].” I'll tell friends that and they'll think it's funny, I'm really bad in those subjects and Asians are supposed to be good ... I'll make jokes

like that and they say, “Fang, you can’t say things like that.” And I’m like, “It’s okay, because I’m Asian so I can make those jokes.”

Hannah said her favorite class was English. She also liked her AP US History class, biology, and loved learning languages. She was taking both French and Spanish. She went through her list of subjects saying she liked most of her classes this year, but ended with saying, “And math is okay. . . I have no real attachments to math.” Ivy, who was in the IB advanced program, said her hardest subjects were Spanish and math. Ivy’s English teacher, Ms. Walters said she was a gifted writer and good at analyzing literature. Jenna said she liked math, but her middle school science teacher, Mr. Drew, recalled having to work at getting Jenna to be confident enough in science to speak up more. Kayla said she hated math, although her math teacher said she consistently maintained the highest average in the class.

To summarize, there was a predominant theme that adoptees felt they did not fit the Asian stereotype of being good at or liking math or science. The data from adoptee and educator interviews supported this theme, as did the results of the MA and VA subscales of the PASCI. Even some who were successful in math and science proclaimed they did not enjoy the subjects. Numerous comments were made about not fitting into the Asian stereotype regarding math or science. It is reiterated here that the PASCI-MA and VA subscales measure the student’s perceived mathematical and verbal ability, not actual performance or achievement in those subjects.

This fifth theme of Asian stereotypes addressed research question one regarding how CAs perceive the experience of being a CA in the contexts of school and with peers. The majority of adoptees (7 out of 11) rated themselves lower in math ability than verbal, and

many shared comments made by their peers about how they did not fit into the Asian stereotypes. Theme four also addressed research question five comparing the perspectives of the CAs to those of the educators. There was evidence from educators that CAs were less interested in the math and sciences and more interested the humanities such as English, history, foreign languages, and the arts. CAs regarded themselves as being lower in mathematical ability than verbal ability, but some educators thought perhaps it was more indicative of their preferred interests in those subjects than an actual reflection of their ability.

#### **Theme 6: Resilience**

Parents and educators perceived traits of resilience in the adoptees. CAs exhibited adaptive behaviors that enabled them to be academically successful and well-adjusted socially and emotionally. The adoptees experienced a variety of emotional concerns, physical problems, social adjustment issues, learning problems, outside stressors, and disappointments. In spite of these, they were motivated at school, exhibited an optimistic outlook on life, and demonstrated a level a maturity and responsibility beyond their years. This theme did not relate to any of the PASCI subscales so it was not corroborated by that data. The researcher did not locate any instruments to measure the construct of resilience, nor was the purpose of the study to measure it. Most of the support for this theme emerged qualitatively from the researcher's analysis of the transcripts, personal observations, and knowledge of the participants' special circumstances. This theme was informed by data found in the following codes: adoption (at the subcodes of humor, talking about adoption, and unknown things), disappointments, emotional/fears, emotional/feelings, health/emotional, health/physical, personality traits/mature, personality traits/positive



attitude, and resilience. Due to the personal nature of some of the topics discussed here, pseudonyms are not always used and confidentiality is maintained. To protect the participants, the details described below are not elaborated on due to the sensitivity of the information. Rather, they are presented as a generic list of topics.

The positive nature of this theme and those prior might lead one to believe there were very few difficult circumstances present in the lives of these 11 CAs. This is unfortunately not the case. Three of the adoptees were classified as “special needs adoptions” due to health or physical problems, 2 of them severe enough that their survival was uncertain. Some of the physical problems the CAs had to endure included: cleft lip, cleft palate, abscess of the head, severe frostbite burns requiring multiple surgeries, staph infection, viral infection, vascular anomaly, and kidney stones. Some of the girls experienced significant post-adoption emotional issues such as: difficulty bonding, extreme shyness, unexplained fears, temper tantrums, nightmares, sleepwalking, and night terrors. In fact, 4 of the adoptees suffered from frequent night terrors, in some cases for many years. As they got older, some experienced emotional struggles including: feelings of abandonment, insecurity, fear, a difficult time trusting others, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Adoptees endured outside stressors or feelings of loss due to being raised in biracial families and/or children of single parents; parents divorcing; close family members dying; or moving far away from friends and family. At school adoptees dealt with teasing and bullying. Some had been diagnosed with learning disabilities including ADHD, visual processing delays, auditory processing delays, speech impediments, and language acquisition problems.

In accordance with Chinese adoption law, none of the CAs had any information about their birth families or knowledge of the circumstances of their relinquishment. As a result,

there were many unanswered questions for the adoptees. Some of them did not know their actual birthday, or year of birth. One mother commented that her daughter was “a really good sport about not knowing her age, when we changed her birthday a few times.” None of them had any medical history. Three had an early onset of puberty before the age of 10. One adoptee recalled being uncomfortable when she was asked about her medical history, “Oh, we were going to the Bahamas, and they needed our medical records or whatever, and so I just sat there and I didn’t write anything because I didn’t have any family records.”

In many cases, the challenging circumstances just described were mentioned by the parents and not the adoptees themselves. This could be perhaps because the CAs were embarrassed to discuss them, were not aware of them because they were very young, did not feel comfortable discussing them, or the information was not relevant to the questions asked in the interviews. Seven of the parents and 6 of the educators described the CA as mature, responsible, and able to rise above the many struggles described above. Only 4 of the adoptees, however, articulated seeing these traits within themselves. Perhaps the adoptees who did not exhibit these traits, or speak about overcoming their struggles, were still working through certain issues and were, thus, not comfortable speaking about them. Or, perhaps they were still too young to comprehend and be able to express traits of resilience within themselves. One adoptee had numerous health conditions when she was adopted. According to her mother, she would often resist including those personal aspects of her medical problems in essays or stories that she wrote about herself. However, her mother described her daughter as “resilient” three times during her interview.

It is noted here that resilience was not a unanimous theme among all participants and sources. Table 10 indicates the incidences of traits of resilience that emerged by source and

by case. Although 9 of the CAs exhibited or expressed traits of resilience, only 5 were articulated or observed by more than one of the sources—adoptee, parent, or educator. This theme, while not unanimously represented, was still fairly palpable.

Table 10

*Incidence of Traits of Resilience Perceived by Source*

Number of Cases	Traits of Resilience Perceived or Expressed by Source:		
	Adoptee	Parent	Educator
3	X	X	X
1	X	X	
1		X	X
2			X
2		X	
2			

Instead of focusing on the negative, however, most these young ladies chose to be optimistic. Amy was one example of how adoptees found strength in the face of life's difficulties. Her positive outlook allowed her to get through difficult times. When she suffered the deaths of both of her grandfathers and broke her foot during senior year causing her to miss her senior dance recital, she chose not to dwell in self-pity and sadness. Instead, she wrote about her grandfathers' deaths in school essays as a way of dealing with her grief. She also decided she wanted to become a nurse partially because of the way the nurses treated her during the difficult days in the hospital with her grandfathers. She looked for ways she could turn those losses around into something positive. Instead of becoming angry about losing out on the opportunity to perform her senior dance recital, she focused her efforts on her senior capstone project (which she also struggled with doing, at first). For her capstone project, she chose to write about the Smile Train because of her own experience with cleft lip and palate surgeries. As a result, her capstone project was featured in several newspaper articles and many local residents commended her for outstanding work. Amy never expressed any bitterness about any of these disappointments, but rather chose to turn them into something positive. Mrs. A described Amy's emotional strength through this project:

And then in her article, she was asked, "Is there another surgery that you can go through?" and she said, "Yeah, there is one more, but that's if I want it." and she said, "But I like the way I look."

One adoptee who was extremely shy as a young girl has become less and less so as she had grown up. Her mother and teacher both verified the slow but definite change in her. Her teacher said that she was now able to speak up in class with confidence. She described

her as resilient. Another adoptee who was also shy and quiet as a child had grown into a very social teenager. In fact, she would sometimes get into trouble for talking too much in class. She admitted to being afraid when she had to transition from attending a tiny private school in which she knew everyone to a new and very large high school. By the end of the first day of school, however, she recalled being just fine. She said she now really enjoys being in a large school. She was able to transition smoothly from a small protected environment to a large and unfamiliar one.

One adoptee had severe frostbite burns when she was adopted. As a result, she endured numerous skin graft surgeries throughout her childhood. By the time she was in middle school, she was playing co-ed soccer. Her mother said, “and as little as she is, she could run right under the boys’ legs.” Her teacher commented that she had the physical endurance to keep working, even when she was tired or physically overworked.

To summarize, parents and educators perceived traits of resilience in the adoptees. CAs exhibited adaptive behaviors that enabled them to be academically successful and well-adjusted socially and emotionally. Adoptees experienced a variety of emotional concerns, physical problems, social adjustment issues, learning problems, outside stressors, and disappointments. In spite of these, they displayed persistence and an optimistic outlook on life. Like Amy, some chose to turn their weaknesses into strengths instead of becoming bitter or angry. Others overcame severe shyness as they grew or put their strongest efforts into everything, choosing to triumph over any weaknesses they might have had. At school, adoptees were successful academically, in spite of learning difficulties or disabilities. As discussed in theme four, they possessed a strong work ethic.

This sixth theme of resilience addressed research questions three and four regarding the parents' and educators' perceptions of adoptees' experiences at home and at school. Parents and educators both perceived traits of resilience in CAs, whether they were dealing with physical or emotional issues at home or academic concerns at school. Adoptees chose to look at things that happened to them or around them in a constructive manner. This was confirmed by comments made by adoptees in reference to health issues, family problems, or social predicaments. Adoptees had chosen to look at things in an upbeat way, instead of becoming demoralized. Finally, theme six addressed research question five about how the perspectives of the CAs compared to those of their parents and educators. CAs were not as likely to discuss their own inner strength and ability to overcome difficulties as were their parents and educators.

#### **Theme 7: A Sense of Belonging to a Particular Group**

CAs tended to find a means by which to identify themselves as belonging to a particular group. Some of the identifications were with: (a) a religious faith, (b) other adoptees, particularly peers who were Chinese and/or Asian; (c) other non-adopted Asians; or (d) those from other cultures, such as European cultures. These patterns were repetitious both across and within cases. The statements made by the CAs were confirmed by the parents and educators.

Theme seven was also supported by the PASCI subscale scores for Social Acceptance (SA) and Social Anxiety (SAX). The overall averages for SA and SAX subscale scores were 23 and 20, on a scale of 5 to 35, respectively. These were not the highest scoring subscales for most of the adoptees, but the overall average score for both subscales were above the norms, indicating that the CAs, as a group, were socially self-confident. Theme seven was

informed by data that were coded under the following codes: adoption (subcodes of humor, kinship, and questions), community acceptance, cultural diversity (subcodes of China, diversity, insensitivity of others, other Asians, and travel), identity/cultural, identity/racial, relationships/friends, religion, and school/advice to educators.

Some CAs identified with their Chinese culture, Asian race, or adoptive status; others did not. Parents unanimously made numerous attempts throughout childhood to expose their children to Chinese culture, language, people, and other forms of diversity. Adoptees' recalled their interest in Chinese, Asian, or adoption-related activities fluctuated as they went through different developmental stages. Notwithstanding, all CAs seemed to experience a sense of belonging to some form of religious, adoptive, racial, or cultural group.

**Identifying with religion.** Five of the CAs spoke of their religious upbringing. Fang and Hannah were both raised in combined Jewish and Christian homes. Kayla was raised Jewish. Amy and her mother both spoke of their Catholic faith; Didi and her mother of their Lutheran faith.

Fang explained that her father was Jewish, her mother was Christian, and she and her sister were both Chinese. She talked about how she has been exposed to three distinct cultures just in her own family. However, she explained that on the whole, she was not very religious. She identified with her religious background more from a cultural perspective.

Both Hannah and Kayla identified more with their Jewish upbringing. Hannah mentioned being half Jewish (her father was Jewish), but she did not stress it as being important to her during her interview. However, Ms. Cohen observed that Hannah's Jewish identity seemed to be salient in the classroom. Ms. Cohen said that Hannah mentioned being

Jewish quite often in her Spanish class. She said of Hannah, "I have a sense of her as claiming her Jewish-ness."

Kayla self-proclaimed her identification with being Jewish during her interview, as seen in the following excerpt from the researcher's field notes:

She didn't talk much about being Asian or Chinese, so I wondered about her ethnic identity. She did, however, mention being Jewish. She clearly seemed to identify more with being Jewish than with being Chinese. One of the last things she said was that she enjoys telling people she is an "Asian Jew" because people think it is unusual and it gets a lot of questions.

Mr. Kessler, Kayla's math teacher, confirmed her proclamation. He said that Kayla seemed to identify herself culturally as Jewish, and more racially as Caucasian than Asian. It is interesting to reiterate that Kayla attended school in a district that was 12.5% Caucasian, 2.0% Latin American, 83.4% African American, 1.2% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.4% Native American.

Amy talked a lot about her Catholic faith and upbringing. Mrs. A concurred, saying that their faith is very strong as a family. She recalled praying for years for a second child and how Amy was the answer to those prayers. Amy was actively involved in her church choir and youth group, attended a Catholic high school for one year, and chose to attend a Catholic university. Ms. Duncan also recalled that Amy actively participated in her church.

In a similar manner, Didi identified with her Lutheran faith. Mrs. D mentioned that they went to church every Sunday. When she spoke about the day she got Didi in China, she said, "I think it was God's will." Didi mentioned participating in the church Sunday school,



babysitting in the church nursery, and helping out with church productions or projects. She attended a Lutheran middle school and also chose to enroll at a Lutheran college.

Both Amy and Didi attended schools and lived in areas that were ethnically homogeneous. The demographics for Amy's and Didi's towns are repeated here. The demographics of Amy's school district were: 92.9% Caucasian, 3.1% Latin American, 1.9% African American, 1.9% Asian American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% Native American. There were no racial/ethnic demographics available for the high school that Didi attended, but she did state during her interview that there were no Asians in her middle school and only one other Asian in her high school of whom she was aware. Ms. Peterson indicated on the demographic form for Didi's high school that there were "Many" Caucasian, "Some" Latin American, "Some" African American, and "None or Very Few" Asian Americans. It is worthy to note here that Kayla, Amy, and Didi attended schools and lived in areas that had Asian populations of less than 2%. This may be one explanation for the strong religious identification they each presented.

**Identifying with other adoptees, particularly Asian adoptees.** Several of the CAs spoke of a bond they had with other Chinese adoptees. Brianna and Caitlyn both maintained contact with the group of families that went to China together for their adoptions. In Chinese adoption, these are often called "China sisters" or "travel groups." Both Brianna and Caitlyn had annual reunions with their travel groups which continued to the present. Caitlyn eloquently explained the kinship she had with her travel group in the following quote:

The girls I was adopted with, we're pretty close. It's a sisterhood weird. We share this group together and no matter what, where we go with our lives, this is where we

started, so I've always felt close with them. It's so much fun catching up with them.

They're a great group of girls.

Caitlyn also said, "And your relationships with those who you're adopted with; cherish those. Those are really great. Those are really special. That's something that no one else has. Those are a group of girls that you share something very special with."

Brianna also looked forward to the annual travel group reunions. She felt that the kinship she had with her travel group helped her to know that there were others just like she and her sisters; that she was not alone. She said, "It's nice to know that you have are all these people who are just like you." It helped to normalize her experience as a Chinese adoptee:

And now that I'm saying it out loud it makes sense as to why I never wondered if I'm the only person—I guess like an outcast—because I have known all along that there were tons of people like me.

Fang, Grace, and Hannah had maintained contact with their travel groups through annual reunions, as well. However, the reunions had stopped over the years. Adoptees and parents said those reunions stopped because of long distances between the families or because other activities became more important in the lives of the CAs as they grew older. However, a number of the adoptees found connections with adoptees elsewhere. Fang talked about two close friends who were adopted—one from China and the other from Korea. She said those relationships were special to her and that she has known them most of her life. Jenna, too, spoke of a lifelong friend who was a CA and was like family to her. Through the years, they took Chinese language and dance lessons together.

Amy and Emily had formed a kinship of four families in the neighborhood where they lived growing up. Amy and Emily were adopted from China, and the other two girls were adopted from Korea. Of those friendships, Amy said, “They still are my three closest friends. Our families are like family. . . . It just feels like extended family.” Emily also spoke of this bond with Amy and those families, even though she moved away in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. When asked to compare the bond of those relationships with that of a Chinese friend she met after moving away, she replied:

No. No nothing can ever out do that, or come close. . . I mean, the good thing is even though we’re like five hundred miles away, the bond is still there. Like we still talk to each other like every day, and keep updated. It’s not like it ever, like the relationship ever dies down, I guess. It’s always been there.

An excerpt from the transcript of Amy’s interview is provided below. In it, she articulates the importance of these friendships to her, and how they have maintained a bond even as they have grown into young adulthood. Amy felt her connection with these girls and their families was critical to her security, happiness, and development.

INTERVIEWER: Did you did feel like you were bonded because you were all adopted?

AMY: I think that's what initially brought us together, because our families were close to begin with anyway because of my brothers and their brothers, they started off. But then, once we were adopted it was awesome, because we had brothers who were best friends. Then we had parents who are best friends. It just kept us together that whole entire time. I think overall now as we’re getting older and stuff like that,

we're not as close. But no matter what I know the three of them would do anything for me, and I would do anything for them.

INTERVIEWER: You still keep in contact?

AMY: Oh yeah, I still keep in contact.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. How were those relationships different from other peer relationships?

AMY: I'd say a little bit different only because we had that extra bond. It was like another thing that just kept us together. Even though when things get hard, when my friend [Emily] moved away and stuff like that, I think if it was anyone else I probably would have lost contact with them. But because our families are so close and we were bonded by being adopted and stuff like that, it just kept us together. So I think it's different in that sense that it is like an extra hold on our friendship.

Kayla only spoke of one friend who was adopted domestically. She did not feel that being adopted or Chinese influenced her relationships or choice of friends. However, Mrs. K spoke of their neighbors who had adopted children that played with Kayla and her brother all the time when they were growing up. She said the two families were close. She also pointed out that Kayla's brother was adopted from Korea, and her older sister was half Vietnamese. Mrs. K felt that these exposures helped to normalize diverse families for Kayla.

Ivy did not speak of having a travel group, but did talk about three close CA friends she had growing up: Anna, Catherine, and Jillian. Anna and Ivy were best friends until Anna moved in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Catherine was two years younger than Ivy, but she still kept in touch with her. Jillian lived in another state, but she still considered Jillian to be her best friend and they continued to see one another in the summertime. Ivy also had a new friend named Brian

who was adopted from Vietnam. When asked if those relationships were different from other friendships because they were also adopted and Asian, she replied that she did not think so. However, she twice mentioned that she and Jillian and she and Brian were “like twins.” She said of Brian:

I always say that he’s like – he must be a brother separated at birth even though he is from . . . Vietnam because . . . we both enjoy the same things and we are both adopted and both the same height and kind of look-alike so . . . we are like twins.

When describing those relationships, it sounded as if she was describing a familial type of bond between them. When this was brought to her attention during the interview, she agreed, saying that she often used the term “like family” when she was talking about her friends.

**Identifying with other non-adopted Asians.** Many of the CAs also had close friends who were Chinese and/or Asian, but not adopted. In addition to the four adopted friends previously mentioned, Ivy named at least three friends who were Chinese. Grace spoke of a comfort zone she found with her Asian friends, most of whom were not adopted. Grace did not maintain contact with her travel group. Ms. G explained that the families lived too far apart for them to stay in touch, and they lost contact through the years. Grace explained that she tended to gravitate toward Chinese and Asian peers because she felt an extra sense of security and comfort with them. She said, “I think people tend to gravitate toward those who they think are like them.” It was easier for her to open up to her Asian friends. She enjoyed teasing and making Asian jokes with them.

Both Fang and Hannah participated in an annual summer Chinese culture camp. They spoke of how much they enjoyed participating in the camp. The camp was attended by

mostly Chinese children from Chinese families. Mrs. F said that Fang had acquired a new group of primarily Chinese friends from the camp and she had maintained contact with them.

**Identifying with other cultures.** The situation was a little different for Didi than for most of the other CAs. Didi had grown up in a predominantly senior citizen neighborhood with almost no children around, attended school with mostly Caucasians, and spent her summers in Norway. Didi talked about being Asian and how she looked different from most of the people around her—with her dark hair, eyes, and complexion. She spoke about physical appearances, mentioning how her peers would say, in her presence, that they thought Chinese people were not attractive. She also recalled a couple of events in elementary school when other children teased her for her Asian features. Mrs. D described how Didi had always been afraid of Chinese people and had no interest in Chinese cultural activities growing up. She said Didi had those fears from the moment she was adopted.

It was not surprising then, to hear Didi identified with being Norwegian. Mrs. Peterson said of her, “She almost ... always wanted to connect more with her Norwegian heritage than her Chinese heritage, and she would joke about, you know, that whole interconnection between the three, and who she was. . .” Mrs. Peterson felt that Didi’s race influenced her socially because, “Nobody viewed Didi as being Asian. They saw the Asian, but she was Norwegian.” Even Mrs. D said that Didi “feels Norwegian.” Didi agreed, saying that her friends who made comments about Chinese people not being attractive did so because they did not see her as Chinese. When asked how she responded to those comments, she said:

Well, I don’t really say anything, it’s kind of funny because sometimes my friends don’t look at me as a Chinese person, because I’m always in Norway and I speak

Norwegian. So they always viewed me as a Norwegian person. Which is kind of funny, because they don't really see my Chinese-ness, I guess. I don't know. This did not seem to bother Didi, but she did say it influenced her socially. She explained how it has made her learn not to judge others just by the way they look.

Since Didi was not exposed to other Asians, she instead identified with what she was familiar and comfortable with. Emily had some analogous experiences. After Emily and her family moved from her closely-knit group of adoptees, to an area where she had very little exposure to other Asians or adoptees, she said she lost faith. Mrs. E recalled two incidences after they moved when she was treated insensitively by the parents of other children just because she was Chinese. Emily talked about how she did not want to date Asian guys. In high school, she was encouraged to take Chinese language as a freshman, but she rejected it. Ms. Scribner said she felt that Emily was unsure as to where she fit in culturally, and that this was a struggle for her. Instead of embracing her Chinese culture, Emily had instead become interested in other cultures. She expressed an interest in studying international business so she could travel and learn about other cultures. Prior to her interview, she had just returned from visiting her boyfriend in Finland. She talked about wanting to move to Finland in the future. It is interesting to note that Emily's boyfriend was also adopted.

To summarize, adoptees obtained a sense of belonging by identifying with one or more groups. Some of those included Chinese travel groups, other CAs, other Asian adoptees (such as Korean or Vietnamese), or non-adopted Asians. CAs represented themselves in a variety of ways, such as being Jewish, Catholic, Lutheran, Chinese, Asian, Norwegian, or adopted. In some cases adoptees directly expressed these identifications. In other cases, they emerged from the data as comments, contradictions, likes, or dislikes. In a

few cases, adoptees appeared to be rebuffing their Chinese heritage in lieu of embracing a different identity. In the majority of cases, however, there seemed to be a blend of both their Chinese and other identities.

This seventh theme of a sense of belonging addressed research question one on how CAs perceived their experiences socially and in the larger context of the community and society. Adoptees intentionally or unintentionally identified with certain peer, social, religious, cultural, racial, or ethnic groups in an effort to feel a sense of belonging. Most CAs were able to successfully blend these identities with their identity of being a Chinese adoptee. This theme also addressed research question five. Some educators commented on CAs' association with a religion, and parents confirmed the CAs' socializations with Asians or other Asian adoptees.

### **Theme 8: Interest in a Variety of Cultures**

CAs articulated an appreciation for diverse exposures in life. Many of CAs enjoyed traveling, learning about other cultures, and learning foreign languages. A theme of enjoying travel and learning languages was pervasive across cases. Mrs. I described this theme eloquently when she said of her own daughters, "they're not just Chinese Americans; they are kids of the world."

The predominance of the data supporting this theme came directly from statements made by the adoptees. In a few instances, comments from parents and educators confirmed the pattern. This theme did not relate to any of the PASCI subscales so it was not corroborated by that data. Theme eight was informed by data that were coded under the following codes: cultural diversity (subcodes of China, Chinese language, diversity, other languages, and travel), identity/cultural, and identity/racial.



**Enjoying travel and learning about other cultures.** Eight of the 11 adoptees had traveled to countries outside the US. They spoke of how those travel opportunities helped them to appreciate what they had and to respect people's differences. Some of them had traveled widely.

Fang was exposed to many different races, cultures, and religions because she lived in a diverse neighborhood and traveled with her family a lot. She said she loved to travel and experience other cultures. She had been to China twice and enjoyed learning about the culture there. At home she had a Chinese nanny and her family hosted several international exchange students. Fang expressed that her exposure to diversity has helped her to feel normalized. She said she loved to travel. She believed that her travel experiences as well as the diversity to which she had been exposed had enabled her to experience things that many of her peers had not had the privilege of experiencing.

Ivy had also been exposed to extensive travel opportunities because her parents both worked in the travel industry. Ivy had traveled to 59 countries. She said that her exposure to so many different types of people made her more accepting and open-minded. Ms. Walters agreed, saying that Ivy's extensive travel experiences have "helped her be very open-minded and have that global mindedness that she needs as an IB [international baccalaureate] student."

Hannah had been to France and Greece. She also chose to go on a mission's trip to South America the previous summer to help the poor and immerse herself in the Spanish language. She explained how her experience in South America transformed her:

Well, the actual experience was so challenging because I was living in the most primitive area like I had dirt floors, it's like they were wood houses, no running

water. . . . If there were latrines, I took bucket baths. So I just grew so much; I met all of these people who lived there. That's the only lifestyle they ever know and I just felt so grateful to have something else.

Emily, as previously mentioned, wanted to earn a master's degree in international business so she could travel to other countries. Her father traveled for business, and she had become interested in traveling herself. She said she was intrigued by other cultures. Emily said, "I guess in a way, since my culture is different from where I live, I got interested in other ones, not just where I'm from."

Didi not only spent every summer in Norway, but she had also traveled throughout the world. She mentioned going to Ecuador, Ireland, Prague, and Budapest. Mrs. D was born in Norway and had previously worked in the airline industry. Mrs. Peterson spoke of how Didi's travel opportunities helped her to do well in school, particularly world history. She said "I mean she's had extensive travel. So she really connected. Almost any place that somebody had studied, she'd been there. I mean, she went to Antarctica!"

Four of the adoptees had the opportunity to travel to China—Ivy, Fang, Brianna, and Caitlyn. Brianna had been to China three times, and Caitlyn went twice. They both concurred that going to China was "eye-opening." Caitlyn described what she saw in China:

The people there...it took us a while to get out there, [the villages] whether or not it was by bus or anything, and you saw it. Those villagers aren't really going anywhere specific. They don't have the ability to hop on a bus like we did and travel there and smile, and meet them and then hop back on our bus and go back to civilization. That just wasn't an option for them. So that was eye-opening because it was in some ways it was sad that they weren't going to be able to get out of that very small village.

Caitlyn was very interested in studying about Asian cultures. She was majoring in Asian History, had studied Chinese history in high school, and Japanese history in college. Brianna appreciated the exposure she had in China, as well:

I understood it was an educational thing, too, not just a vacation. This was to kind of teach us about where we came from and stuff like that. I just tried to absorb everything, and I remember a lot from there, not like whole scenes but like little snippets here and there. I'm pretty sure those memories will stay with me forever.

**An interest in learning foreign languages.** Related to the above travel opportunities and articulated interest in other cultures, there was also a pattern of interest in learning foreign languages. Four of the adoptees were taking more than one foreign language, and Didi was bilingual. Grace was taking Spanish in school, but also expressed the desire to learn other languages like Russian, Swedish, or Norwegian. She said she would like to go to Japan and was interested in Japanese animé. Grace was so interested in learning Russian that she took it upon herself to learn the Cyrillic alphabet during the summer. Kayla expressed with pride that she took Hebrew classes growing up and had been to Israel. She said her strength was in the languages. She also studied Latin and Spanish in school.

To summarize, there was a pervasive theme of appreciation for diverse exposures in life. CAs enjoyed traveling, learning about other cultures, and learning foreign languages. For various reasons, adoptees had been afforded the opportunities to travel widely. They expressed an interest in learning about diverse cultures. Many had a strength and interest in foreign languages. In light of these exposures, CAs proclaimed that their eyes and minds were opened allowing them to become more globally minded.

This eighth theme of interest in a variety of cultures and languages addressed research questions one and two on how CAs perceived their experiences in the contexts of school and the greater community, and over time. They enjoyed studying history and languages. They were becoming globally minded and possessed an awareness of other cultures, not just Chinese culture. Across cases, they were exposed to a lot of different opportunities and were becoming well-rounded individuals.

### **Theme 9: Fluctuating Appreciation of One's Origins**

Adoptees articulated a fluctuation in their level of interest in Chinese culture over time. Looking back, they described a decrease in their interest in things Chinese as they approached early and middle adolescence. As they grew into later adolescence and young adulthood, older adoptees were beginning to make decisions about their futures based upon the experiences of being Chinese and/or adopted. They were contemplating careers that were reflective of their lives, circumstances, and exposures. The older adoptees were also recognizing a renewed interest in Chinese culture and language. Theme nine was informed by data included at the following codes: activities/adoption related, adoption/questions, cultural diversity (subcodes of China, Chinese culture, Chinese language, and Chinese pride), future plans/career, future plans/family, identity/change over time, and identity/cultural.

Of the eleven participants, six were 16 years old at the time of the interview and still attending high school. They included Fang, Grace, Hannah, Ivy, Jenna, and Kayla. The remaining five participants had already graduated from high school and were attending college or about to begin college. They included Amy (19), Brianna (19), Caitlyn (20), Didi (18), and Emily (19). The CAs in the younger cohort were just beginning to explore career

options, whereas the career choices of the older cohort were more solidified. The younger cohort will be discussed first.

Fang had extensive exposure to Chinese culture and many Chinese people growing up. She has a definite interest in and appreciation for things Chinese—not so much of a pride as a well-rounded interest. As she has grown older, however, she said her participation in Chinese-related activities has decreased because she is much busier with other activities such as sports. Yet, Fang did choose to continue studying Chinese language in high school.

Hannah was also exposed to a lot of Chinese culture. She attended a Chinese culture camp every summer for eight years. Hannah learned Chinese in elementary school, but later switched to Spanish. She too said she just doesn't have time for all the activities right now, and had chosen other activities over Chinese. She did say, though, that she would like to learn more about Chinese culture and pick up studying the language again in the future.

As a group, 8 of the 11 adoptees had taken Chinese language lessons growing up, either privately or at school. Although only one was still learning the language, five expressed the desire to study Chinese at a later point in their lives. Ivy attended Chinese school on Sundays until 6<sup>th</sup> grade. She disliked it because most of the other children came from Chinese speaking homes and were able to obtain help from their parents. As a result, Ivy felt she could not progress in the language and became frustrated with it. At home, Ivy's family celebrated Chinese New Year, and she did Chinese activities in elementary school. However, she also commented that she and her family did less and less of that as she got older. Kayla also said that other activities took precedence over the Chinese activities as she got busier at school. Emily was exposed to a lot of Chinese culture and other Asian adoptees in elementary school. After she moved in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, on the other hand, she did not have as

much exposure to the culture and missed her adoptive friends. By the time she got to high school, she did not want to take Chinese as a language, even though it was offered in the curriculum.

Jenna took Chinese language for nine years and Chinese dance for three years, but she did not have happy memories of either. She summed up her lack of desire to learn about the culture at this point in her life:

I'm not a big like culture person. Like a lot of people think I know everything about China because I'm from China, like I really can't answer that because I don't know. And I guess I'm not interested I can say. Like I'm here, I'm more interested in where I am now than the past.

The older cohort of adoptees also saw a pattern of decreasing interest and time for Chinese cultural activities as they grew into early and middle adolescence. As young adults, however, they were beginning to make different choices. In high school, Amy chose to do her senior capstone project on a topic inspired by her adoption experience. In college, she was studying to become a nurse and expressed a direct connection between her career choice and life experiences. Brianna also recalled her interest in Chinese culture decline as she grew up. Since her last of three trips to China, however, she had a renewed interest. Brianna said she was happy in her life, hopes to adopt in the future, and plans to study Chinese culture. Similarly, Caitlyn, who was the oldest of the participants, noticed that her interest in Chinese history sparked later in high school. As a young adult, she had begun to embrace Chinese culture. She was majoring in Chinese history in college and planning to conduct her senior research project with Chinese orphans. Caitlyn's long term plan was to become a social worker and specialize in the field of adoption. As a young woman, she felt that her

aspirations for the future were directly influenced by being Chinese and adopted. She emphasized her fluctuating interest through the years by commenting of other adoptees, “I almost guarantee you that once adopted kids grow up, they will become more curious.”

Interestingly, Didi experienced the opposite pattern. Having feared Chinese people when she was younger, she refused any attempts Mrs. D made to expose her to Chinese people, language, or culture. Fortunately, she and Mrs. D both observed that her fears had declined as she had grown older. In fact, in high school she started taking Spanish and later decided to switch to Chinese. Ultimately, she even befriended a Chinese exchange student who was in the class.

To summarize, there was a theme of fluctuating interest in Chinese culture and language as CAs were growing up. There was a genuine interest in Chinese culture when adoptees were young and throughout most of elementary school. As they approached middle school and adolescence, however, that interest notably decreased. Adoptees who were 18 years of age or older expressed a renewed interest in their origins. Older adoptees were beginning to make decisions about their futures based upon their experiences of being Chinese and/or adopted. They observed that their experiences were directing their choices for the future.

This ninth and last theme addressed research question two about how adoptees retrospectively perceived their life experiences at different stages of development. There was evidence that CAs had a declined interest in their origins in and through early and middle adolescence. As they grew into late adolescence and young adulthood, CAs were beginning to explore their origins, and resolve themselves into careers that were reflective of their lives, circumstances, and exposures.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this research was to gain insight qualitatively from young adult CAs who were at an age at which they could personally reflect upon their own experiences. The focus was the development of identity, the experiences of academic life, and the quality of family, peer, social, and community relationships.

This chapter began with an overview of the three participant groups—adoptees, parents, and educators. Individual profiles of each of the 11 cases presented demographic details of the 33 participants. The steps of the coding, analysis, thematic development, and auditing procedures were described. A comprehensive discussion of the nine themes that emerged from the analysis of the data, and their relationship to the research questions was then provided.

The processes of coding, cross-case analyses, and within-case analyses resulted in the following nine overarching themes: (a) good fortune and specialness, (b) family bonding and appreciation, (c) self-confidence, (d) strong work ethic, (e) Asian stereotypes, (f) resilience, (g) sense of belonging, (h) interest in a variety of cultures, and (i) fluctuating appreciation of origins. The implications of the findings with regard to the research questions will be addressed next in Chapter 5.



## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter begins with a summary of the research process. A discussion of the findings of the study as they pertain to the five research questions and the literature follows. Then, the implications of the research for educators, parents, and professionals in the field of adoption are presented. The chapter concludes with the limitations to the study and suggestions for further research.

### **Summary of the Research**

Prior to 1990, most of the research on adoption focused on the mental health issues and social/emotional adjustment problems of adoptees as an at-risk population. Subsequent investigators in the field challenged much of the prior research, calling for a shift in the focus of the research on adoption from pathology to resilience (Brodzinsky et al., 1998; Zamostny et al., 2003). If factors responsible for positive experiences were to be elucidated, the information could be used by parents, educators, and mental health professionals to improve upon services provided to adoptees and their families.

International adoption from China started in the early 1990s and began to increase rapidly around 1995. Chinese adoptees (CAs) currently represent the largest single group of international/interracial adoptees who are under 18 years of age, most of them female. The first of this cohort are approaching or already in young adulthood.

There have been very few studies conducted with CAs since the 1990s (Hoshmand et al., 2006; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tong, 2005). The limited research that has been conducted on this population suggests that they have fared quite well (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2011; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tan, 2006). There was evidence that they had bonded well with family members in their adoptive homes and were successful in

school (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tong, 2005). However, since most CAs had not reached the age of majority, those outcomes have been ascertained through research studies done with the adoptive parents or CAs prior to adolescence (Cao & Pitman, 2008; Tan, 2004a; Tan & Nakkula, 2004; Tessler et al., 1999). Those studies that did include the perspectives of the adoptees were comprised of samples that were younger than 14 years old (Adams et al., 2005; Norris, 2006; Tessler et al., 2009; Tu, 2001).

Further research specific to CAs is necessary, especially since the first of this large group of CAs are coming of age as adolescents and are forming their own personal and social identities (Lee, 2006). Adolescents and young adults between the ages of 16 and 20 are cognitively able to expound upon how their adoptive identity emerged through adolescence, and how they have evolved emotionally, socially, and academically.

Therefore, this qualitative study was designed to gain insight from young adult CAs. The focus was the development of identity, the experiences of academic life, and the quality of family, peer, and community relationships. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do adolescent and young adult CAs perceive their experiences in different sociological contexts: at home, with peers, at school, and in the community?
2. Retrospectively, how do CAs perceive their life experiences at different stages of development: during childhood, during adolescence, and at present?
3. How do parents view their child's family, social, and academic experiences?
4. How do educators (as defined by teachers, school counselors, coaches, and the like), who work with the CAs view their academic progress and overall adjustment?

5. How do the perspectives of the CAs compare to those of their parents and educators?

To answer the research questions, a multi-case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) was designed and conducted with 11 total cases. The unit of analysis (or subject) was the adoptee. Each case consisted of the adoptee, one parent, and one educator who worked with the adoptee. A total of 33 semi-structured interviews were conducted. The inclusion of the perspectives of parents and educators provided triangulation of the data through different sources to enhance the credibility and consistency of the findings. In addition to the individual interviews, each participant completed a demographic survey, and each adoptee participant completed the PASCI (Fleming, 2007), a self-concept survey.

Confidentiality laws ruled out the possibility of obtaining a list of adoptees from adoption agencies and contacting them directly. This necessitated that all participants be self-selected volunteers. Participants were recruited through word-of-mouth, networking, and publicity announcements. Efforts were made to obtain as diverse a group of participants as possible by using *maximum variation sampling* (Gall et al., 2005). This type of sampling requires at least 10 cases, or participant groups, and participants with diverse demographics in an effort to represent the variation in the phenomenon being studied. The final group of 33 participants represented various ages, family structures, school settings, community settings, and religious affiliations.

Data were analyzed with NVIVO 9 (QSR International, 2010). Pre-coding and two separate cycles of coding were conducted using the methods encouraged by Saldaña (2009). Themes emerged from the resulting patterns and connections observed during the processes

of coding, within-case analyses, and cross-case analyses. Themes were elicited through the use of an inductive, grounded theory approach (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

Analysis of the data resulted in the following nine overarching themes:

1. Good fortune and specialness
2. Family bonding and appreciation
3. Self-confidence
4. Strong work ethic
5. Asian stereotypes
6. Resilience
7. Sense of belonging
8. Interest in a variety of cultures
9. Fluctuating appreciation of origins

As themes were developed, selected PASCI subscale scores were compared to the within case themes that developed. This was done in an effort to corroborate the resultant themes and reduce researcher bias. This next section discusses the nine themes as they related to the research questions.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The first two research questions attempted to describe how the CAs perceived their experiences in different contexts of their lives and over time. The third and fourth research questions informed how the parents and educators viewed the CA's family, social, and academic progress. The final research question compared the perspectives of the three sources. A summary of the themes related to the research questions is presented in Figure 6.

**RQ1: How do CAs perceive their experiences in different sociological contexts?**

- Theme 1: Good fortune and specialness
- Theme 2: Family bonding and appreciation
- Theme 3: Self-confidence
- Theme 5: Asian stereotypes
- Theme 7: Sense of belonging
- Theme 8: Interest in a variety of cultures

**RQ3: How do parents view the CAs family, social, and academic experiences?**

- Theme 2: Family bonding and appreciation
- Theme 3: Self-confidence
- Theme 4: Strong work ethic
- Theme 6: Resilience

**RQ2: Retrospectively, how do CAs perceive their life experiences at different stages of development?**

- Theme 1: Good fortune and specialness
- Theme 8: Interest in a variety of cultures
- Theme 9: Fluctuating appreciation of origins

**RQ4: How do educators who work with the CAs view their academic progress and adjustment?**

- Theme 2: Family bonding and appreciation
- Theme 3: Self-confidence
- Theme 4: Strong work ethic
- Theme 6: Resilience

**RQ5: How do the perceptions of the CAs compare to those of their parents and educators?**

- Theme 2: Family bonding and appreciation
- Theme 3: Self-confidence
- Theme 4: Strong work ethic
- Theme 5: Asian stereotypes
- Theme 6: Resilience
- Theme 7: Sense of belonging

Figure 6. A summary of themes related to the

## Research Question One

The first research question explored the CAs' perceptions of their experiences at home, in school, with peers, and in the community. Data analysis revealed that CAs: (a) described a sense of feeling fortunate or special; (b) were closely bonded with their families or appreciative of what their parent(s) had done for them; (c) were self-confident; (d) felt they did not fit the Asian stereotypes of being good at or liking math or science; (e) looked for a sense of belonging by identifying themselves (consciously or unconsciously) as being part of a particular group; and (f) articulated an interest in being exposed to diverse cultures. Following is an in-depth discussion of each theme as it pertains to this first research question, the literature, and related theory.

**Good fortune and specialness.** There was a common theme among CAs that they felt fortunate to have been provided better opportunities in life than they would have had in China. CAs had a positive perception of their experiences at home and with their peers. They delighted in the fact that they somehow stood out as unique from their peers. However, they did not feel they were fragile in any way because of having been adopted, but rather wanted to be viewed and treated like any other teenager or young adult. The average PASCI subscale scores for Self-Regard (SR) and Social Acceptance (SA) were above the midrange score of 20, on a scale from 5 to 35. This indicated that participants regarded themselves in a positive way, and were socially comfortable.

The theme of good fortune and specialness concurred with the results of Tong's (2005) research. She found that CAs possessed a positive sense of self-identity. This outcome was in contrast, however, to the research conducted with Korean adoptees by Ramsey and Mika (2011). They found that Korean adoptees often felt like outsiders in both

their ancestral and adoptive communities; or that they were between two different worlds with one foot in each. This theme also conflicted with Cao and Pitman's (2008) research in which many of the CAs experienced racism, expressed wanting to be White, and felt ostracized by their peers. Although some participants in the current study mentioned episodes of being teased at school, most of those events occurred when they were young, and did not render a feeling of being ostracized by their peers. Rather, these CAs delighted in being and feeling different from others around them. The PASCI subscale scores and the emergence of this theme from the data indicated that older CAs delighted in being unique, but did not want to appear fragile. They wanted to be treated just like everyone else.

**Family bonding and appreciation.** CAs were happy in their families and had healthy family relationships. Most CAs expressed being close with their parents, siblings, or extended family members. They spoke of their parents with love, respect, and admiration. The results of the PA subscale of the PASCI robustly supported this theme by indicating that they felt accepted by their parent(s). Most of those who had siblings talked about the relationships as close, regardless of whether they were adopted or biologically born. The few who were not particularly close with siblings still confirmed that there was an atmosphere of mutual respect with minimal disagreement. Adoptees also articulated an awareness of the meaning of family with a depth of insight beyond their years.

This theme supported the notion that CAs have developed firm emotional attachments and bonded well with their families (Tong, 2005). It also supported the positive predictions regarding CAs from previous research (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). According to Bowlby (1973) attachment can be an issue for those children who were never able to attach to a primary caregiver. Fortunately, the results of this study indicate that CAs had been able to

develop secure attachment relationships with parent(s) and other family members. This has inevitably supported their development of identity (Erikson, 1968).

**Self-confidence.** Adoptees had a strong sense of self and positive self-regard. This theme manifested itself through comments made by adoptees pertaining to their social relationships and personality traits, and was sustained by the researcher's personal observations during interviews. The results of the self-regard (SR) subscale of the PASCI strongly support this theme. Across cases, the average of the SR subscale for all 11 adoptees was the second-highest subscale score of 28 out of 35 points. Within cases, the SR subscale score was the highest or next to highest score for 5 of the adoptee participants (refer to Table 8).

**Asian stereotypes.** There was a predominant theme that CAs felt they did not fit the Asian stereotype of being good at or liking math or science. The data from adoptee interviews and the results of the mathematical ability (MA) and verbal ability (VA) subscales of the PASCI substantiated this theme. The majority of CAs (7 out of 11) rated themselves lower in math ability than verbal, and many shared comments made by their peers about how they did not fit into the Asian stereotypes. Numerous references were made to not fitting into the Asian stereotype regarding math or science. Even some who were successful in math and science proclaimed they did not enjoy those subjects.

This outcome reflected the importance of the macrosystem on CAs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem consists of the attitudes and ideologies of the child's larger society. For CAs, there is a disparity between their performance in math or science and how others around them expect them to perform. This disparity presented itself as more of an annoyance or comic interplay than an identity issue for the CAs. However, it could also be a way of



rejecting the Chinese or Asian part of their identity. One educator questioned whether there was a real weakness in math and science, or whether it was just a perception of weakness on the part of the adoptee due to a lack of interest in those subjects. One participant who expressed a dislike of math was ironically able to maintain the highest average in her math class.

**Sense of belonging.** CAs tended to find a means by which to identify themselves as belonging to a particular group. Some adoptees identified with their Chinese culture, Asian race, or adoptive status; others did not. Some also identified with: (a) a religious faith, (b) other adoptees, particularly those that were Chinese and/or Asian; (c) other non-adopted Asians; or (d) other cultures, such as European cultures. This pattern of needing to belong to a particular group was representative of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) force of the exosystem. CAs were negotiating connections with groups within their microsystems by identifying themselves as members of religious, peer, family, cultural, or ethnic groups.

Park (2011) found that Korean adoptees often facilitated a kinship with other Korean adoptees, and found those relationships to be beneficial to their development of identity. Similar research with CAs also found that connections with "China sisters," or adoption travel groups, were a crucial component of their identity, and those who had such connections were more positive about their Chinese identity (Cao & Pitman, 2008). Some of the CAs in the present study expressed the importance of relationships with their "China sisters" or other Asian adoptees, and in those cases the relationships were indeed vital to the development of identity. However, it was interesting to observe that those CAs who did not have connections with other Asian adoptees seemed to find a sense of belonging elsewhere. Whether it was with a religion, another culture, or other non-adopted Asians, there was a

definite quest for a sense of belonging. As a group, those identifications seemed to be providing the desired sense of belonging for them.

**Interest in a variety of cultures.** There was a pervasive theme of appreciation for diverse exposures in life. CAs enjoyed traveling, learning about other cultures, and learning foreign languages. For various reasons, many had been afforded the opportunity to travel widely. They expressed an interest in learning about diverse cultures. Many had a strength and interest in foreign languages. In light of these exposures, CAs proclaimed that their eyes and minds were opened allowing them to become more globally minded.

Parents of CAs in the study unanimously resolved to expose their children to Chinese culture, language, people, and other forms of diversity throughout their upbringing. This was consistent across cases, regardless of whether they resided in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This supported the assertion in the literature that families of more recent international adoptees have made concerted efforts to provide their children with diverse opportunities (Lee, 2006; Tu, 2001). The literature on international adoption emphasizes the importance of parents' efforts to foster ethnic pride and ethnic identity development in their children. Korean adoptees that possess stronger ethnic pride and identity have been shown to have better psychosocial and psychological adjustment and overall well-being (Basow, et al., 2008; Silverman & Feigelman, 1990; Tessler et al., 1999; Yoon, 2004). Additionally, exposure to cultural experiences from any diverse culture can be beneficial, not just exposure to the child's own ethnic culture (Basow et al.; Yoon, 2004).

This pattern of interest in a variety of cultures, traveling, and foreign languages was symbolic of the effect of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) macrosystem. For the internationally adopted child, disparities may exist between the customs of their birth culture and home

culture, confusing the development of cultural/ethnic identity (Park, 2011; Ramsey & Mika, 2011). This practice of exposure to diverse cultures might help to alleviate some of those incongruities for CAs by broadening their experiences and thus their worlds.

Phinney (1990) presented evidence in her research on interracial/international adoptees that a strong racial identity did not always coincide with a strong ethnic identity. This might offer one explanation as to why CAs searched for belonging to certain groups and expressed interest in a variety of cultures.

## **Research Question Two**

The second research question explored how CAs retrospectively perceived their experiences at different stages of development: in childhood, during adolescence, and at present. This research question addressed suggestions from prior research studies to determine how CAs perceived their experiences at different stages of development (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tan & Nakkula, 2004; Tong, 2005; Tu, 2001).

Data analysis revealed that over time CAs: (a) described a sense of feeling fortunate or special resulting in an apparent desire going forward to help others in need; (b) articulated an interest in a variety of diverse cultures; and (c) observed a fluctuation in their level of interest in Chinese culture over time. Following is a discussion of these two themes as they relate to the literature and theory.

**Good fortune and specialness.** As part of this theme, there was a realization among the CAs of their own good fortune and a resulting desire to want to help others in need. This theme manifested itself in a few different ways. Some spoke of wanting to support and care for their parents when they grew older, and wanting to adopt children themselves. Others expressed having empathy and compassion for those who are poor, sick, elderly, homeless,

orphaned, or disabled. CAs showed evidence of wanting to “pay it forward” to others in their present and future lives. They vocalized a direct connection between the circumstances of being adopted or from China and wanting to help others in need.

**Interest in a variety of cultures.** There was a pervasive theme of appreciation for diverse exposures in life. CAs enjoyed traveling, learning about other cultures, and learning foreign languages. Four of the adoptees were taking more than one foreign language in school, and one was bilingual. For various reasons, adoptees had been afforded the opportunities to travel widely. They expressed an interest in learning about diverse cultures. In light of these exposures, CAs proclaimed that their eyes and minds were opened allowing them to become more globally minded. Three of the 5 adoptees who were currently attending college had selected a major or minor in international studies or history.

**Fluctuating appreciation of origins.** There was a theme of fluctuating interest in Chinese culture and language as CAs were growing up. There was a genuine interest in Chinese culture when CAs were young and throughout most of elementary school. As they approached middle school and adolescence, however, that interest notably decreased. Adoptees who were 18 years of age or older expressed a renewed interest in their origins. Older CAs were beginning to make decisions about their futures based upon their experiences of being Chinese and/or adopted. They articulated that their experiences as a CA were directing their choices for the future. They were pondering careers in the helping professions, such as nursing, social work, and teaching.

In the research, there was evidence to suggest that ethnic identity was not necessarily a linear construct, but more cyclical (Phinney, 1990). Erikson’s (1968) theory, although developmental, also allows for one to revisit prior stages of identity development as the

individual grows and adapts. The CAs in this study showed a cyclical pattern in relation to the cultural/ethnic aspects of their identity. Their interest in Chinese culture fluctuated from one stage of development to the next. However, the pattern was beginning to indicate that the CAs were embracing their Chinese origins more as they were grower older. This is consistent with the theories on various constructs of identity development (Brodzinsky, 1997; Erickson, 1968, 1980; Kirk, 1964, 1988; Phinney, 1990; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001).

**Theoretical connections.** The aforementioned results related to research questions one and two correspond with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. CAs were successfully negotiating the forces of the microsystems including family, school, neighborhood, and peer group. CAs were indeed active participants in these contexts. They were also influenced by the forces of the macrosystem, navigating through the attitudes and ideologies of society by recognizing and addressing stereotypes. In the exosystem, they were successfully fostering connections between one or more groups within their microsystems in an effort to achieve a sense of belonging. Finally, the effect of the chronosystem on CAs was apparent as they were growing older and realizing a stronger connection to their ethnic/cultural origins.

The results of themes related to research questions one and two also correspond to the psychosocial tasks associated with parent-child adjustment in intercountry adoption (Brodzinsky, 1987; Brodzinsky et al., 1998; Kirk, 1988; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001), which was adapted from Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial identity development and presented in Table 1. The CAs in this study were able to adequately negotiate through many of the adoption-related tasks and culturally influenced tasks of this model, particularly those in the middle childhood and adolescence stages of Erikson's identity development. The CAs

in this study had begun to explore or already realized some of the tasks of being an internationally adopted adolescent. CAs showed evidence of beginning to achieve the following tasks:

- To understand and explore meanings and implications of being adopted by articulating a sense of good fortune and feeling special
- To connect adoption to a sense of identity by bonding well with their adoptive families and searching for a sense of belonging
- To resolve a fantasy of family romance by bonding well with their adoptive families and recognizing their specialness
- To cope with the stigma of adoption and peer reactions by recognizing racial stereotypes, being self-confident, self-aware, and searching for a sense of belonging
- To cope with physical differences from family members and friends by using humor in their day to day interactions
- To connect race and cultural heritage to development of a healthy racial identity by exploring interests in diverse cultures in addition to their own Chinese and American cultures

### **Research Questions Three and Four**

The third and fourth research questions explored the parents' and educators' perceptions of the CAs' family, social, and academic experiences. Ironically, the same four themes emerged for research questions three and four. It is emphasized here that the data from the parents and educators were separate and distinct; they were not interviewed together

and did not collaborate during the study. However, results from the analyses of the educators' and parents' interviews validated each other, resulting in the same four themes. Analysis of the data revealed that CAs were: (a) closely bonded with their families; (b) viewed as confident, self-aware, and exhibited positive self-esteem; (c) described as having a strong work ethic, exhibiting high levels of motivation, determination, and tenacity; and (e) perceived as exhibiting traits of resilience, adjusting well academically, socially, at home, and in extracurricular activities. Following is an in-depth discussion of each theme as it pertains to these research questions, the literature, and related theory.

**Family bonding and appreciation.** It has already been highlighted that CAs expressed being close with their families and appreciative of them. This assertion was mirrored by the parents. Parents spoke of being firmly bonded with their daughters and expressed that adoptive parent-child relationships were equivalent to those they had with biological children. Parents also talked about sibling relationships being strong between both adopted and biological siblings. Responses from the research showed that parents treasured their daughters, in spite of difficulties they might have had. The results of the PASCI-PA subscale vigorously supported this finding as the highest average subscale score overall. It was evident that CAs felt accepted by their parent(s).

Educators commented about the close family bonds, as well, noting that the CAs were very connected with their families. In some cases educators mentioned that family came first even before their friends or extracurricular activities. This was a characteristic that they found very uncommon among this age group. Results indicated that educators admired the levels of bonding, love, and dedication they observed in these young women.

This theme was consistent with results of early studies with adoptive parents that preschool age CAs were adjusting as well as their non-adopted peers and were exhibiting positive overall initial adjustment at home (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tessler et al., 1999). It was also consistent with Tong's (2005) results of firm emotional attachments, based on her research with older school-aged CAs and their parents.

**Self-confidence.** CAs exhibited high levels of confidence and self-worth. Many of the educators and parents described personality traits that pointed to strength of character in these young ladies. Some of those traits included being responsible, mature, assertive, and well-spoken. CAs were described as being sure of themselves, seeming unaffected by responses of their peers, and willing to express their own opinions,. The word "confident" was used repeatedly when the educators were describing the CAs. The researcher's personal observations of the adoptees during interviews were consistent with what the educators and parents described. In many cases, the adoptees exuded poise during the interviews. This theme was not supported by the actual words of the adoptee participants, indicating that perhaps they themselves were not as aware of their self-confidence. Adoptees were more apt to discuss their families, friends, and activities than their own accomplishments or strengths. However, the results of the PASCI-SR subscale did support a positive sense self-worth.

Yoon's research (2004) with Korean adoptees concluded that children had higher collective self-esteem when parents supported their ethnic socialization. It has already been mentioned that the parents in this study made it a priority to consistently expose their children to Chinese culture. Yoon (2004) also found that Korean adoptees raised in families that were warm and communicated well were a primary source of the adoptees' subjective well-being. The theme of family bonding has already been established. These findings may



explain why the CAs in this study exuded such self-confidence. A recent study with CAs indicated scores on social skills as similar to as or higher than the US normative sample (Tan & Camras, 2011), which also supports this finding.

**Strong work ethic.** Chinese adoptees did well in school, some of them excelling. They were perceived by parents and educators as determined, capable, focused, self-motivated, and tenacious. In most cases, results indicated that CAs were unassuming about their own achievements—but the parents were not. Parents celebrated the achievements of their daughters with pride. Educators viewed CAs as very self-motivated, hard-working, and self-aware. This perception was consistent across cases, even those who perceived themselves as average students, struggled with learning problems, or just didn't like school very much.

**Resilience.** Parents and educators perceived traits of resilience in the adoptees. CAs exhibited adaptive behaviors that enabled them to be academically successful and well-adjusted socially and emotionally. CAs experienced a variety of emotional concerns, physical problems, social adjustment issues, learning problems, outside stressors, and disappointments. In spite of these, they have managed to adapt well by being successful at school, maintaining strong relationships, and exhibiting a positive, optimistic outlook on life.

The limited research on CAs has supported the notion that language acquisition, academic performance, and social/emotional adjustment of CAs have been consistently positive in comparison to their non-adopted peers (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001; Tan, 2006; Tan et al., 2010). The themes of strong work ethic and resilience that emerged, as perceived by their parents and educators, agree with those findings.

**Theoretical connections.** The results of themes related to research questions three and four also correspond to the psychosocial tasks associated with parent-child adjustment in intercountry adoption presented in Table 1 (Brodzinsky, 1987; Brodzinsky et al., 1998; Kirk, 1988; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). The CAs in this study showed evidence of beginning to achieve the adoption-related tasks of middle childhood and stages of adolescence regarding Erikson's (1968) identity development. This was substantiated by the perceptions of their parents and educators, confirming that CAs were navigating through adoption-related tasks and were able to:

- cope with adoption-related loss, especially related to the sense of self, as evidenced by their self-confidence, positive self-esteem, and resilience
- freely explore questions about adoption in light of complications associated with the adoption-related grief process
- cope with social stigma or peer reactions to their adoptive status
- connect adoption to a sense of identity

Observations indicated that CAs were able to achieve the above-mentioned developmental tasks because of the positive influences within the microsystems of home, school, church, and community. This was supported by the interactions of those influences within the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **Research Question Five**

The fifth research question sought to compare the perspectives of the CAs with those of their parents and educators. The three themes of good fortune and specialness, interest in a variety of cultures, and fluctuating appreciation of origins emerged primarily from the data

obtained from adoptees. These three themes did not surface from the data of parents and educators. A review of the remaining six themes revealed the following comparisons.

**Family bonding and appreciation.** The theme of family bonding and appreciation emerged from data obtained from all three sources. The PASCI-PA subscale scores upheld the words of the CAs regarding this theme. There was agreement across all three sources and all cases that CAs were close with their families and/or appreciative of what their parent(s) had done for them.

**Self-confidence.** The theme of self-confidence emerged from data obtained from all three sources. In most cases, the CAs did not directly express that they were confident, except through their scores on the PASCI-SR subscale. This theme was not unanimous across all 11 cases and all sources in each case, but was still a predominant theme.

**Strong work ethic.** The theme of “strong work ethic” emerged from data obtained from all three sources. There was an agreement across all three sources that CAs possessed a strong work ethic in school, sports, and extracurricular activities. There were some CAs that did not recognize a strong work ethic within themselves. Nonetheless, they were portrayed as such by parents and educators.

**Asian stereotypes.** The theme of not fitting the Asian stereotype of being good at or liking math or science emerged from data obtained from adoptees and educators. The PASCI-MA and VA subscale scores upheld the words of the adoptees regarding this theme. This theme was not unanimous across all 11 cases and all sources in each case, but was still a predominant theme. Some observations showed that there was a question on the part of the educators as to whether they were perceived rather than actual weaknesses in those subjects.

On the other hand, there was agreement by most educators as to what were the adoptees' academic strengths.

**Resilience.** The theme of resilience surfaced primarily from the data obtained from parents and educators; although 4 adoptees expressed that they possessed traits of resilience. Out of the 11 cases, 7 parents and 6 educators spoke of the CA as exhibiting resilience. CAs were described as being mature, responsible, adaptable, emotionally stable, intrinsically motivated, and strong in spite of difficulties. While not unanimous across cases and sources, it was nevertheless a powerful theme.

**Sense of belonging.** The theme of a sense of belonging to a particular group emerged from data obtained from all three sources. In some cases, the CAs did not directly express that they identified with a particular group. Rather, it emerged from indirect comments or contradictions that they made. At times, educators and parents recognized connections that were either not expressed or not recognized by the adoptees. This theme was unanimous across all 11 cases.

Research on adoptive identity development has indicated that it is a lifelong process that can become more complex as more dimensions of differentness are added to a person's image (Grotevant, 1997). Grotevant et al. (2000) described adoptive identity as consisting of three components: (a) the intrapsychic, (b) relations within the family, and (c) interactions with contacts outside the family. By considering and comparing the perspectives of the adoptees, parents, and educators, the resultant themes addressed those three components. Consequently, the themes that emerged from this study should be indicative of the adoptive identity of the 11 participants.

This section provided an in-depth discussion of each of the nine themes as they pertained to the five research questions, the literature, and related theory. Next, possible implications of this research will be presented.

### **Implications of the Research**

The purpose of this research study was to describe the essence of the experience of being a CA growing up in the United States. The intent was to give voice to the oldest group of CAs who were in late adolescence or young-adulthood. The perceptions of the parents and educators were included to support the credibility and consistency of the findings. Prior to this study, adoptive parents, educators, educational researchers, and counseling/social work practitioners had to generalize from the existing body of literature pertaining to other groups of international or interracial adoptees. This is primarily because there had been minimal research of this type dealing specifically with CAs (Brodzinsky et al., 1998; Hoshmand et al., 2006).

This section provides implications for educators and adoption professionals who work with CAs, as well as implications for adoptive parents. Throughout the following discussion, the term “educators” will refer to classroom teachers as well as to student support services personnel including: counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, speech/language therapists, occupational therapists, and administrators.

#### **Implications for Educators**

The results of this study revealed that the CAs themselves did not want to be singled out or treated as different at school. The resulting themes indicated that parents and educators perceived self-confidence, resilience, and a strong work ethic in the CAs. Adoptees felt fortunate and did not want to be pitied by others, particularly in front of their

peers. Nonetheless, there are still implications of this research for educators and educational institutions. One is the need for sensitivity training programs for pre-service as well as in-service educators. Possible topics for such training programs are suggested below. There was also a pervasive theme of appreciation for diverse exposures, including learning about other cultures and studying foreign languages.

One of the most prevalent comments made by the adoptees in this study was in response to the question, “What advice, if any, would you give to educators in regard to working with CAs?” The adoptees in this study overwhelmingly responded that they did not want to be treated differently than anyone else. Although CAs expressed a sense of good fortune and specialness, they did not want to be singled out as different at school.

One CA described how others’ comments at school sometimes annoyed her because they alluded to her adoption as a negative thing. She said,

Just don’t treat it like it’s a bad thing. Because I remember I told someone I was adopted once and they were like, “I’m so sorry.” And I was like, “Well, I’m not. Thanks for your sympathy.” So like don’t think it’s a bad thing, just treat them like any other person. It’s not a big deal unless you make it a big deal.

Another CA described how others would sometimes pity her because she was adopted. She commented, “I guess if you are like me and it happened when you were little, it’s just a fact of life and it’s not awkward until someone else makes it awkward for you.”

**Sensitivity training programs for working with diverse families.** Training should be offered to all pre-service educators as part of required coursework on working with diverse populations. One educator in the study commented, “We are a multicultural country, but we’re still very segregated in where we live and work, or go to school.” For in-service

educators working in more homogeneous school districts, sensitivity programs could be offered as professional development sessions or at conferences for support service personnel and educational leaders. Such training and professional development programs could include some of the following topics:

**1. *Re-defining the meaning of “family” in schools.*** Discussion of families in schools should be expanded to include (among others) multiracial families; adoptive families; and families with single, divorced, or remarried parents. Some children are raised by gay/lesbian parents, grandparents, or other kin. Some children live in foster homes, or are in the care of the state. Many adoptive families have open adoption relationships with birth parents that are sometimes included in the educational decisions regarding the children. More recently, schools are seeing children who were conceived through fertility methods, such as sperm donation and surrogacy, and those individuals might be involved in the child’s life, as well. Thus, there is a necessity for a new, albeit more complex definition of family in schools today. This re-definition should include exposure to and use of more contemporary, family-related language indicative of diverse families. Educators should become comfortable with utilizing terms such as “biological parent,” “birthparent,” or “partner,” and to avoid terms such as “real mom,” “real dad,” or “real sibling.” One educator in the study talked about how she handles the diversity of her students’ families by broadening the definition in her own mind, as follows:

Teachers just need to be sensitive to the many diverse family configurations that we see now in our classrooms. We have kids, obviously, from divorced, blended, mixed, adopted [families]. You know, when I do my family [unit], I say, “Look, your family is whoever you live with. It might be grandparents, it might be an aunt or an uncle, it

might be a guardian, it might be a mom, it might be two moms, it might be a mom and a dad. Whoever loves you and takes care of you, that's your family." That's all. The people you live with.

**2. *Highlighting the importance of being familiar with your students and their families.*** Educators who are more familiar with the student's family and individual circumstances can recognize patterns or unique concerns that might exist. The results of this study indicated that for CAs in particular, their families might be more influential and more important to them than their peers or other activities of school, unlike many of their adolescent contemporaries. An understanding of the whole child, including their family, can benefit everyone involved.

One of the educators interviewed shared that knowing the adoptee's family was helpful to her in her dealings with the adoptee at school. She recalled,

I would think one thing that really helped me . . . was that I had a good relationship with the entire family. . . . when things got really tough and we needed to have those tough conversations that relationship was there. And it was helpful because they were able to tell me things about the family dynamics; or about [her] being adopted. And things that were able to give me a little bit more insight in the classroom.

Another educator who had a lot of experience working with internationally adopted children, talked about how she revamped certain assignments to incorporate the experiences of adopted children. She explained how each situation was different and needed to be treated accordingly. She gave the following advice on working with adoptive families, in particular:

I think it's very important to talk with their parents about it. What they feel is important to them, how much have they shared with their child about their adoption.



We had one family at our school where there was an open adoption, and the children's birth parents, mother and father, visited them twice a year, came and visited us at school, you know. So we – it was kind of like all different experiences and you've got to be sensitive to – and really kind of support each family in a way that they have either chosen to handle their adoption, or how circumstances have dictated they handle their adoption.

**3. *Using sensitivity in class discussions and assignments.*** It might be necessary for educators to revamp certain assignments for students where there might be sensitivity to topics such as genetics, abortion, abandonment of children, political or social policies in other countries, etc. Although CAs might exhibit pride in their unique circumstances of adoption, they may not wish to be singled out as different at school, particularly when an uncomfortable or sensitive topic might be presented. One of the CAs interviewed for this study recalled how a class discussion on abortion affected her emotionally and how the teacher subsequently removed her from the classroom. She recalled feeling embarrassed first because of the emotions that came up, but second by being moved to another location in front of her peers. Regarding this experience, she said, “don’t try to single them out as being different, but know that the adopted child might need support. . .” Alternative assignment options should always be offered to the entire class of students, not just those from adoptive or other forms of non-traditional families, so those students don’t feel singled out.

All of the aforementioned suggestions require a familiarity with one’s students and their families. If such partnerships with families are successfully formed, educators will be better able to preemptively recognize certain students’ sensitivities or concerns related to

such topics in class discussion, reaching out to those students privately prior to class discussion to alert them and provide options to them.

**4. *Avoiding racial stereotypes regarding academic interests and cultural knowledge.*** Educators should be encouraged to avoid racial stereotypes. All Asian students do not have a proclivity for certain subjects, such as math or science. The words of the adoptees' in this study clearly revealed this. The results indicated that CAs were more interested in English and foreign languages than in math and science. Even though this theme might be indicative of the sample of the CAs in this study only, it is clear that no assumptions should be made regarding an adoptee's (or any other child's) abilities or interests based solely upon race or ethnicity. Every child is an individual with his or her own interests, skills, and abilities distinct from his or her race. It is also important to recognize that CAs or other international adoptees do not necessarily have any specific knowledge in or interest about their birth country and culture. This is particularly true in cases where the child was adopted at a very young age.

**Recognizing possible interests in other cultures.** The CAs in this study expressed an interest in learning about diverse cultures (not just those of their birth culture) and foreign languages. CAs tended to find a sense of belonging by identifying with a particular group, and that identification was not always with China and Chinese people. This proclivity for diverse cultural exposure can be utilized by educators who work with CAs or other international adoptees, especially school counselors and foreign language teachers at the secondary level.

These diverse interests can be tapped by educators who work with CAs. If such interests present themselves, school counselors can encourage courses in foreign languages

or international studies, and world language teachers can encourage the pursuit of travel experiences or studying abroad. One educator in the study touched upon this topic:

I just feel like it's very important to keep them very well-rounded. To surround them with different opportunities in life, because a lot of kids come to us who have very limited backgrounds. And a lot of times that cycles their future, where they can and cannot go, you know what their opportunities can be. I feel that it's very important to help them to become well-rounded people.

To summarize, this study with CAs provided numerous broad-based implications for educators who work not just with CAs, but with other international adoptees, or children from other forms of diverse families. Several suggestions particular to the CAs who participated in this study have been offered. The CAs in this study expressed the desire to be treated like everyone else. However, they also wanted others at school, including their peers, to recognize their individual circumstances as unique and to be treated with sensitivity when warranted. A major implication for educators is to provide sensitivity training programs for working with diverse families. Four areas to be addressed in such training programs were recommended.

### **Implications for Adoption and Counseling Professionals**

The themes that emerged from this research study could also be applied by professionals in the field of adoption and counseling (social workers, counselors, adoption agencies, and the like) to develop programs on adoptive identity development for CAs and possibly other international adoptees and families. Adoption and counseling professionals could utilize the findings in group programs and counseling practices. Some of the pertinent thematic findings and related suggestions are made here.

**Family bonding and appreciation.** A predominant theme among CAs in this study was the presence of strong family relationships. This theme can be utilized to reinforce programs and support services. If a strong family connection exists, it would be an advantage that can be tapped into when helping adoptees and their families in support programs.

**Self-confidence, resilience, and strong work ethic.** These themes were recognized more by the parents and educators than by the adoptees themselves. CAs were perceived as possessing these traits by others but were not yet recognizing those assets within themselves. This information can be used in programs to support adolescent adoptees by helping them build upon their strengths and recognize their abilities.

**Racial stereotypes.** CAs spoke of often being stereotyped by educators and peers. This might be an area to include in support programs for international or interracial adoptees. Adoptees can be provided with age appropriate advocacy skills for dealing with stereotypes in school, with peers, and in the community.

**Sense of belonging and interest in a variety cultures.** CAs tended to find a means by which to identify themselves as belonging to a particular group. Some identified with a religious belief, other international adoptees, or other Asians. Many also expressed an interest in learning about other cultures and languages. Adoption and counseling professionals could detect, foster, and build upon some of those possible connections with their clients in an effort to strengthen identity development.

### **Implications for Parents**

Some final implications are offered for the parents of CAs. The researcher, being a parent of two CAs herself, admittedly desired to offer some implications for parents. Three

themes salient for parents of CAs were: (a) a fluctuating appreciation of one's origins, (b) an interest in a variety of cultures, and (c) good fortune and specialness.

From this research, an important recognition for parents is that CAs may not desire to connect with their birth heritage, culture, or language at different points in their development. There was a pattern of reduced interest in Chinese culture during early and middle adolescence. One of the oldest of the adoptee participants in the study talked about how her interest in Chinese cultural activities declined during those middle years. Reflecting back, she was able to describe how her interest in China had come full-circle:

I really did want to enjoy and like those events. I guess now looking back on it, I would never say it's wrong to teach your children about their culture ever, but I think to what degree, how much do you want to push it? Because I almost guarantee you that once adopted kids grow up, they will become more curious. Then they will come to you and ask. They will do the research on their own, and become more interested as they grow up. That's not a 100% guarantee, but it's pretty close to it because I think, like we said in the beginning, I've always known I was adopted. That had never been a question. It's always been on the table. China has always been on the table. I think I have come to want to study about it.

In summary, CAs very well might have other interests, and those interests should be encouraged and fostered. Some might become interested in other cultures and languages. Parents should allow CAs to pursue whatever interests they desire as they grow, realizing that as they mature they may begin to express a renewed interest in China, maybe even eventually pursuing careers that relate to their experiences of being a CA.

Finally, parents who observe a desire in their children to be of service to others are encouraged to foster opportunities for their children to volunteer or participate in community service projects. This could build upon possible feelings of good fortune, cultivate a desire to help others, and encourage good citizenship.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This qualitative research study sought to provide a rich, descriptive illumination of the experience of growing up as a CA in the United States. The goal was to capture the essence of their experiences in the different sociological contexts of home, school, and greater community.

Quantitative research focuses on measuring numerical data from controlled experiments with representative samples. The focus of quantitative analysis is on reducing and controlling data that can be used for making predictions for a similar population. Conversely, qualitative research focuses on describing, explaining, and understanding the meaning of a particular phenomenon from the perspective of the informants.

As with any research, this study was subject to threats of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Guba (1981) identified the same four criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Guba identified them respectively as truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. As recommended by Krefting (1991), strategies were employed by the researcher to ensure the trustworthiness within each criterion of Guba's model.

The nature of this research resulted in three restrictions to the credibility of the study. They included: (a) the voluntary, self-selected sample, (b) the lack of prolonged or varied field experiences, and (c) the use of Skype technology for interviewing certain participants.

The lack of a random sample might have resulted in participant biases and have skewed the findings toward the positive results. The inability to conduct prolonged or varied field experiences in different contextual environments might have produced less rigorous findings. The use of remote interviewing through Skype also limited the ability to gain prolonged experiences with the participants. At times, the remote technology presented connectivity issues and interrupted the flow of the interview process. In an effort to address these concerns, a multi-case study design and a maximum variation sampling method were employed to provide for a more diverse range of cases (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Merriam, 1998). The final sample included 11 total cases including exceptional cases, as recommended by King and Horrocks (2010). The researcher utilized triangulation of sources, multiple methods of data collection, and developed in-depth interview protocols to address the lack of extended and varied exposure. Initial and terminal member checking were performed in two stages: first, by providing all participants with copies of the written transcripts of their interviews, and then offering each the opportunity to review the final analysis and results.

A significant limitation to this study is that the results cannot be generalized to all CAs, or to other groups of international adoptees. In response to this limitation, dense descriptions and demographics of the 11 cases were provided to maintain contextual meaning. Lincoln and Guba (1985) encourage qualitative researchers to adequately describe the data base that will allow the potential user of the research to make the final judgment of applicability. It is emphasized here that transferability was not the goal of this multi-case study. The purpose was to describe the essence of the experiences of the CAs who participated, not to make predictions or generalize their experiences to other adoptees. Any

judgment regarding the transferability and implications of the results is left to the discretion of the reader (Merriam, 1998). Thus, it is recommended that the findings that emerged from this study be interpreted by the individual for suitable use in their respective profession or for further research.

Threats to the dependability of this study, Guba's (1981) third standard of trustworthiness, are that (a) data were obtained primarily through self-report of the participants, and (b) the scope of the study was expansive. To address these threats, the researcher used triangulation of sources. This was done with the hope of enhancing or confirming the perspectives of CAs from the perspectives of others who knew them. Different methods of data collection were also used. In addition to the individual interviews, the demographic surveys and self-concept instrument (PASCI) were included for this purpose. The researcher maintained an auditable trail of the methods, procedures, and analyses throughout the research project. A dense description of the research methods was provided in the methodology section, and copies of all instruments were provided in the appendices so the study could be replicable. Finally, the researcher used a code-recode procedure during the analysis phase of the study, completing a minimum of two coding phases.

Another considerable intimidation to the trustworthiness of the results was that of researcher bias. As the parent of two CAs herself, the researcher admittedly possessed certain biases. In order to ensure neutrality of the data, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest an inquiry, or confirmability audit. Thus, the researcher obtained a colleague who was well-versed in qualitative research to conduct a confirmability audit of the data analysis. The auditor received samples of the raw data, including transcript excerpts, coding categories,



and a list of the themes. Throughout the processes of data collection, coding, and analysis the researcher maintained: copious field notes; a log of activities, contacts, and methods; an ongoing reflexivity journal of personal thoughts, biases, and values; and, analytic coding memos. Finally, in an effort to report impartial results that conveyed the words and thoughts of the participants, numerous direct quotes were provided within the results.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Limited qualitative research has been done with adolescent CAs and their families (Cao & Pitman, 2008; Tan & Nakkula, 2004; Tong, 2005; Tu, 2001). The researcher was unable to locate any studies conducted with CAs over the age of 13. This research is, therefore, investigative in nature. Although the population of CAs is quite small in comparison to all adoptees, further research is warranted as this population grows older. Recommendations for future research with CAs across various disciplines are offered here. Some of the recommendations emerged as an extension of the current research, while others were beyond the scope of the current study.

Three of the participants in this study were raised by Jewish parents. The sense of belonging and expressions of specialness that emerged highlighted the existence of a niche in the population of CAs who are raised in Jewish families. Two of the Jewish participants expressly identified with their Jewish heritage. It would be intriguing to conduct future studies dealing with Jewish CAs (or Jewish Asian adoptees) to ascertain their unique characteristics in comparison to those adoptees who are non-Jewish.

Another topic that warrants future exploration is that of the early onset of puberty. At least three of the participants experienced an early onset of puberty. Further study with female CAs, and other international adoptees, might inform medical professionals and

parents regarding the proportions of—and perhaps explanations for—this apparent phenomenon. It would also be interesting to study domestic female adoptees for this same purpose to make comparisons between international and domestic adoptees.

Some participants experienced a variety of sleep problems. Further research on sleep disorders in adoptees, international or domestic, is warranted. Do adoptees experience more night terrors, sleep-walking, or co-sleeping arrangements than the general population? Is there a pattern of sleep problems that exists with any specific population of adoptees? How are sleep problems related to early life experiences or post-traumatic stress? These are areas that would provide valuable information to parents, medical professionals, and those who work in the field of adoption.

It is recommended that research with adult CAs continues as they grow into young adulthood and begin to explore career options and make choices for the future. The themes of fluctuating appreciation of their origins and interest in a variety of cultures that emerged suggest that CAs might make career and other life choices as a direct result of their unique multicultural experiences growing up. Further investigations into the construct of resilience in this particular group of international adoptees are also recommended as the CAs mature. Ethnographic or phenomenological studies with fewer participants and narrower scope would produce more details pertaining to their experiences.

A final suggestion for future research would be to explore the theme that CAs felt they did not fit the Asian stereotype of being good at or liking math or science. The question exists whether the participants in this study possessed an actual weakness in math or science, or whether they just perceived a weakness. Was this pattern really an aversive reaction to the expectations of society that they should like those subjects? In addition, is there a gender

effect that caused this theme to emerge? All the participants in this study were female. It would be interesting to explore this topic further by investigating the topic with both male and female Asian adoptees.

### **Conclusion**

This research was conducted to give voice to young adult female CAs in the United States. The focus was the development of identity, experiences of academic life, and the quality of family, peer, and community relationships. It was designed as a multi-case, qualitative study to answer five research questions. The first two research questions attempted to describe how the CAs perceived their experiences in different contexts of their lives and over time. The second and third research questions informed how the parents and educators viewed the CAs' family, social, and academic progress. The final research question compared the perspectives of the three sources.

Qualitative analysis within and across cases resulted in the following nine overarching themes:

1. Good fortune and specialness
2. Family bonding and appreciation
3. Self-confidence
4. Strong work ethic
5. Asian stereotypes
6. Resilience
7. Sense of belonging
8. Interest in a variety of cultures
9. Fluctuating appreciation of origins

Resulting implications were offered for parents, educators, and professionals in the field of adoption.

The ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu once said, “Go to the people. Learn from them. Live with them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. The best of leaders when the job is done, when the task is accomplished, the people will say we have done it ourselves.” The idea and organization of this study are the work of the researcher, but the results reported herein are illuminated by the words and stories of the adoptees, parents, and educators who participated. This work is attributed to the 11 Chinese adoptees—Amy, Brianna, Caitlyn, Didi, Emily, Fang, Grace, Hannah, Ivy, Jenna, and Kayla—who willingly participated and shared their lives for the research. It is in this spirit that the results emerged and are reported herein.

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## Appendix A: Adoptee Demographic Survey

**ADOPTION RESEARCH STUDY  
ADOPTEE DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

**Instructions:** Please complete the following questions as completely and honestly as possible. If you are not sure of the answer to a question, or it does not apply to you, you may leave it blank.

(1) Your current age: \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Your age at adoption: \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Indicate your current grade or status in school  
(only circle or complete the one item which applies to your  
current and highest level of education):

High school student in grade:                      9              10              11              12

College Student:                                      FR              SO              JR              SR

College Graduate                      Year of graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

College Major, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

Not currently attending school

(4) Do you currently work?      \_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

*If so, indicate*      \_\_\_\_\_ FT      \_\_\_\_\_ PT

*What type of work do you do?* \_\_\_\_\_

(5) Do you have any children?      \_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

(6) Are you married?      \_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

(7) Have you ever visited China?      \_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

*If so, at what age(s)?* \_\_\_\_\_

(8) Do you have any information regarding, or contact with, your birthparent(s)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

(Over, please)

***Please answer the following questions about your adoptive family:***

(9) Please identify all the children in your family by completing the following table. List the children in order from oldest to youngest, indicating yourself with an asterisk (\*) in the first column.

<b>* Study Participant</b>	<b>Child #:</b>	<b>Current Age:</b>	<b>Gender (circle one):</b>	<b>Status of child in the family (circle one):</b>	<b>Check if currently living at home:</b>
	<b>1</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological Adopted Stepchild Other</b>	
	<b>2</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological Adopted Stepchild Other</b>	
	<b>3</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological Adopted Stepchild Other</b>	
	<b>4</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological Adopted Stepchild Other</b>	
	<b>5</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological Adopted Stepchild Other</b>	
	<b>6</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological Adopted Stepchild Other</b>	

(10) How did you hear about this study (word of mouth, adoption newsletter, flyer, online announcement, etc)? Please be as specific as possible.

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!**

## Appendix B: Adoptee Semi-structured Interview Protocol

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ADOPTION RESEARCH STUDY</b> <b>ADOPTTEE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL</b></p>
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**Instructions to read to the Respondent (R):**

**The purpose of this interview is to discuss your experiences as an adoptee growing up: at home with family members, in school and social circles with your peers, and in the greater community setting. We will address these areas separately.**

**After I read each question to you, take your time to answer the question as completely and honestly as possible. If you need the question repeated, feel free to ask me to do so.**

**If you are not sure how to answer a question, or do not understand it, ask me to clarify it for you.**

**If a question makes you uncomfortable and you do not wish to answer it, you may just say,**

**“I would like to pass on this question and return to it later” or simply, “I would like to pass on answering this question”.**

**This interview could take up to 2 hours, so I will be asking you periodically if you would like to take a break.**

**Prior to beginning the interview:**

**Review the demographic survey adoptee has completed, verifying each item for accuracy and clarifying any questions pertaining to their school status, current work status, and family information.**

<b>HOME AND FAMILY</b>
------------------------

(1) Please begin by telling me as much as you can about your adoption story?

**Probes:**

- **Why did your parents adopt?**
- **When did you first know you were adopted?**
- **What did your parents tell you about your adoption?**
- **Did the things they told you change over time? If so, what feelings did that provoke?**
- **What feelings did any of the details of your adoption story provoke in you? Can you elaborate?**
- **Have you had any contact with any members of your birthfamily?**
- **Do you have any information regarding your birthfamily?**

(2) Can you describe your family for me?

**Probes:**

- **Who are the family members (siblings, parents, etc)**
- **Anyone else in family adopted? Adopted from China?**
- **If two parents, are they still married, remarried, divorced, widowed...?**
- **How does everyone get along?**
- **What types of things do you do together for fun?**
- **How often do you get together.**
- **Describe a recent time with family—what did you do, how did it feel, who was there?**

(3) Who are you closest to in your family? Can you tell me a little bit about this relationship and why it is so close?

(4) Alternatively, who are you least closest to in your family? Can you tell me a little bit about this relationship and why it is not so close?

(5) Do you feel comfortable talking about your adoption with your family?

**Probes:**

- **Whom do you feel most comfortable talking about it with?**
- **Why this person?**
- **How often do you have these types of conversations?**
- **Who usually initiates the conversations?**
- **What types of feelings do these conversations provoke in you?**
- **What types of things do you usually talk about with them?**

(6) If R has any adopted siblings continue (otherwise skip this item)  
Ask, who are the one or two adopted siblings closest in age to you?

**Probes:**

- **Can you tell me a little about this/these relationship(s)?**
- **How has this/these relationships influenced your life?**

(7) If R has any non-adopted siblings continue (otherwise skip this item)  
Ask, who are the one or two non-adopted siblings closest in age to you?

**Probes:**

- **Can you tell me a little about this/these relationship(s)?**
- **How has this/these relationship(s) influenced your life?**

(8) While growing up, did you learn about Chinese culture at all?

**If yes:**

- **What did you learn (Chinese language instruction, celebrate holidays, have Chinese artwork or items around your home, celebrate with Chinese culture organizations, visits to China, have Chinese friends, etc)?**
- **Have R. elaborate on any of the above.**
- **How did these cultural activities change from childhood, through adolescence, and into young adulthood? (Did they increase, decrease, did your attitude/desire to be involved in them change?**

**If no:**

- **How do you feel about not learning any Chinese culture?**
- **Do you wish you had? Why or Why Not?**

(9a) While growing up, did your family recognize or celebrate any adoption related holidays or activities (such as the day you came home, adoption day, gotcha day, family day, etc.)?

**If yes:**

- **What celebrations/activities/holidays did you have?**
- **Have R. elaborate on any of the above.**
- **Can you describe one such activity?**
- **How did these celebrations/activities/holidays change from childhood, through adolescence, and into young adulthood? (Did they increase, decrease, did your attitude/desire to be involved in them change?**

**If no:**

- **How do you feel about not having these types of celebrations?**
- **Do you wish you had? Why or Why Not?**

(9b) While growing up, did you attend any events or gatherings held by adoption agencies or other adoption organizations?

**If yes:**

- What were these events?
- Have R. elaborate on any of the above. Can you describe such an event?
- How did these celebrations/activities/holidays change from childhood, through adolescence, and into young adulthood? (Did they increase, decrease, did your attitude/desire to be involved in them change?)

**If no:**

- How do you feel about not participating in these types of events?
- Do you wish you had? Why or Why Not?

**(10) Ask the appropriate set of questions below given the R's marital/parent status:**

**(10A) If not married and no children: Ask the following questions**

Think about your plans for your life 10-15 years from now. Can you describe what your family might look like (your own family, not the one you grew up in)?  
*Give a concrete example of this for the R.*

**Probes:**

- Will you be married?
- Have children?
- Would you adopt children?
- Who will be in your family? Will there be others living with you?
- Where do you think you will live?
- How will your future family be different from the one you grew up in?

**(10B) If married w/no children yet: Ask the following questions**

Think about your plans for your life 10-15 years from now. Can you describe what your family might look like (your own family, not the one you grew up in)?

- Do you plan to have children?
- Would you adopt children?
- Where might you live?
- How will your future family be different from the one you grew up in?

**(10C) If R has children already: Ask the following questions**

Think about your plans for your life 10-15 years from now. Can you describe what your family might look like (your own family, not the one you grew up in)?

- Do you plan to have more children?
- Would you adopt children?
- If not married already, "Do you plan on getting married?"
- Where might you live?
- How will your future family be different from the one you grew up in?



(11) If you were giving advice to a person considering adopting a child, what might you want to say to them?

(12) If you had a friend who was pregnant and considering putting her baby up for adoption, what might you want to say to her?

(13) What insights about family has growing up as a Chinese adoptee given you?

**If R visited China, ask the following set of questions. If not, skip them and move on to the next section.**

(14) Can you talk about your trip(s) to China?

**Probes:**

- How long did you go for?
- Where did you go? What did you do?
- Did you go to your hometown? Orphanage? Foster family?
- Did you enjoy the trip?
- What feelings did this trip provoke in you?
- What did China feel, taste, smell, look like?
- What did you like/dislike about it?
- Did you feel any different after this trip?
- Would you want to go back? If not, why? If so, when?

**If R has any information/contact with birthfamily members, ask the following questions. If not, skip them and move on to the next section.**

(15) You indicated you have information regarding your birthfamily?

**Probes:**

- When did you obtain this information?
- How did you obtain it?
- Was the information provided to you unsolicited, or did you ask for it?
- Have you met any birthfamily members or communicated with any of them?
- What feelings has this knowledge/contact provoked in you?
- How has this influenced you?

*Ask if R would like to take a quick break before moving on to the next set of questions.*

SCHOOL & ACADEMICS
--------------------

(16) How do you feel about school, in general?

**Probes:**

- What does school mean to you?

(17) Can you describe yourself as a student?

**Probes:**

- What motivates you?

(18) Tell me about your *academic* school experiences in general throughout the years.

**Probes:**

**Describe your experiences as you grew up:**

- In elementary school
- In middle school
- In high school
- In college (if applicable)

(19) Did you ever experience a situation in school because of being *adopted* that made you uncomfortable? If yes, continue:

**Probes:**

- Can you describe of one such occurrence?
- How did it affect you?
- How did you respond?
- Would you have responded differently if you could have? Explain how?

(20) What are/were some of the *best* things about school for you?

**Probes:**

- Learning and studying?
- Social relationships with peers?
- Extra-curricular activities? If so, what were they?
- Teachers?
- Can you give an example of one of the best things that ever happened at school?
- Differences at varying stages (elem, ms, hs, college)?
- Which stage was best for you? Why?

(21) Alternatively, what are/were some of the *worst* things about school for you?

**Probes:**

- **Learning and studying?**
- **Social relationships with peers?**
- **Extra-curricular activities? If so, what were they?**
- **Teachers?**
- **Can you give an example of one of your worst experiences at school?**
- **Differences at varying stages (elem, ms, hs, college)?**
- **Which stage was worst for you? Why?**

(22) Can you recall meeting other adopted children at school?

**Probes:**

- **Can you name a few of them?**
- **Do you recall how you each found out you were adopted?**
- **Can you describe this relationship?**
- **Did you feel any special bond with this person?**
- **Was this/these relationship different in any way from others? If so, how?**

(23) Do you recall meeting other Chinese children at school (adopted or not)?

**Probes:**

- **Can you name a few of them?**
- **Can you describe this relationship?**
- **Did you feel any special bond with this person?**
- **Was this/these relationship different in any way from others? If so, how?**

(24) Can you estimate how many other Asian students there were in your schools growing up? (Answer either “None /Very Few,” “Some,” or “A lot,” or you can estimate a percentage of Asians):

- **In elementary school**
- **In middle school**
- **In high school**
- **In college (if applicable)**
- **Has the number of Asians in your schools had an influence on your school experience?**
- **If so, at what age(s) did this influence you most? How?**

(25) If you could give feedback to an educator about working with children who are adopted, what would you tell them?

<b>PLANS FOR THE FUTURE</b>
-----------------------------

**(26H) If R is in high school, ask the following questions.**

- a) At this point, what are you thinking about doing after high school? (*College locally, college away from home, trade school or training program, military, work....*)
- b) Have you thought about fields/careers you might be interested in?
- c) What do you like to do for fun? Any careers match those likes?
- d) What are the ways, if any, being adopted has influenced your aspirations for the future?

**(26C) If R is in college or another educational/training program, ask the following questions.**

- a) What is your current major in school?
- b) Why have you chosen this field?
- c) What are your career goals or aspirations?
- d) What are the ways, if any, being adopted has influenced your aspirations for the future?

**(26M) If R is in military, ask the following questions.**

- a) Why did you choose to enter the military?
- b) What are your career goals or aspirations?
- c) What are the ways, if any, being adopted has influenced your aspirations for the future?

**(26W) If R is not currently in school, but working, ask the following questions.**

- a) What type of work do you currently do?
- b) Do you like this type of work?
- c) What are your long-term career goals or aspirations?
- d) What are the ways, if any, being adopted has influenced your aspirations for the future?

*If not already done so, ask R. if they would like to take a break at this time.*

<b>PEERS AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS</b>
---------------------------------------

(27) Would you describe yourself as shy or outgoing? Can you elaborate on this?

(28) Growing up, did you have a lot of friends or a few close friends?

(29) Can you name your one or two closest friends throughout your childhood growing up?

**(29A) Friend #1 Probes:**

- Can you describe this person, what is he/she like?
- How long have you known them?
- Why is F1 one of your closest friends?
- What makes them special?
- What do you talk about?
- What do you do together?
- How do they treat you as compared to other friends?
- How does this person make you feel when they are around?

**(29B) Friend #2 Probes:**

- Same questions as above

(30) Do/Did you have any friends who were also adopted?

**If no, move to next question.**

**If yes, Probes:**

- What are their first names?
- Do you know where they were adopted from?
- Do you talk about adoption with any of them?
- Are any of these friends the ones you mentioned above as your closest?
- Are these friendships different from others? If so, can you elaborate how?

(31) Do/Did you have any friends who are also Chinese (but not adopted)?

**If no, move to next question.**

**If yes, Probes:**

- What are their first names?
- If you know, were they born in China? First generation? Second?
- Do you talk about being Chinese with any of them?

- Are any of these friends the ones you mentioned above as your closest?
- Are these friendships different from others? If so, can you elaborate how?

(32) Are there any particular friends you talk openly and honestly with about adoption?

**Probes:**

- What is/are their first name(s)?
- Are they also adopted?
- Are any of these friends the ones you mentioned above as your closest?
- Why do think you are most comfortable talking with this/these person(s)?

(33) Have you ever experienced peers asking questions about your adoption or ethnicity that made you uncomfortable? If yes, continue:

**Probes:**

- Can you give me an example of one such occurrence?
- What feelings did this provoke in you?
- How did you respond?
- Would you have responded differently if you could have? If so, how?

(34) Do you ever talk with friends about adoption? If so, is there anything that makes you uncomfortable?

**Probes:**

- Types of questions, something private, etc?
- Can you give me an example of one such occurrence?
- How did you respond?
- Would you have responded differently if you could have? Explain how?

(35) Has being *adopted* influenced you socially?

**Probes:**

- If so, how?
- Give examples?
- What feelings has this provoked for you?

(36) Has your *Chinese/Asian heritage* influenced you socially?

**Probes:**

- If so, how?
- Give examples?
- What feelings has this provoked for you?

COMMUNITY
-----------

(37) Can you estimate how many other Asian people there were in your neighborhood growing up? (Answer either “None/Very Few,” “Some,” or “A lot,” or you can estimate a percentage of Asians):

**Probes:**

- In childhood
- In high school
- In college (if applicable)

(38) Did the answer to the previous question regarding the number of Asians in your neighborhood, influence you socially? If no, skip to next question.

**Probes:**

- If so, how?
- Can you give any examples?
- What feelings has this provoked for you?

(39) Were you involved in any community Chinese-related organizations? If no, skip to next question.

**Probes:**

- If so, what organizations?
- At what ages did you participate?
- What types of activities did you do with this organization?
- Did you like it?

(40) What other community activities were you involved in growing up?

**Probes:**

- Sports, church groups, volunteering, theatre, the arts,
- What did you like about these activities?
- Did any of these activities help you develop? If so, can you describe how?

(41) Did you feel “accepted” within your local community growing up?

**Probes:**

- If no, why do you think this may be so? What reasons do you attribute to it?
- If yes, why do you think this may be so? What reasons do you attribute to it?

(42) Can you tell me about any types of formal or informal groups you have been involved with which involve adoption? If none, skip this item.

**Probes:**

- Social Networking, Online blogs, listservs, support groups, etc?
- What make you become involved in them? How long did you participate?
- Did any of these activities help you develop as a Chinese Adoptee? If so, can you describe how?

END OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS--SYNTHESIS
---------------------------------------

(43) What have been some of the *best* things about growing up as and being a Chinese adoptee?

**Probes:**

- **Have you had support from others that have made a difference?**
- **Why do you think these things have been positive for you?**
- **Any particular things or events or people have an influence here?**

(44) What have been some of the *hardest* things about growing up and being a Chinese adoptee?

**Probes:**

- **Have you received help from others in these areas?**
- **What might have made these things easier for you?**
- **Any particular things or events or people have an influence here?**

(45) Based upon your life experiences, is there anything you would like to say to other adoptees, or individuals who have relationships with adoptees?

**Probes, such as:**

- **adoptees?**
- **adoptive parents?**
- **teachers?**
- **Counselors/social workers?**
- **Anyone else?**

(46) Is there anything that we have not talked about today that you feel is pertinent to your experiences growing up as a Chinese adoptee?

*See Next Page...*



**Read to the Respondent:**

**This concludes our interview session.**

**I would like to thank you so very much for your time and willingness to talk about these very personal aspects of your life with me.**

**I hope the results of what you and the other participants in this study have to say will make a difference for other adoptees, whether Chinese or otherwise.**

**I look forward to contacting your parent and the educator whose name you provided to me.**

**I will be contacting them shortly to schedule their interviews.**

**I might also contact you to ask if you would like to review the transcript of this interview to verify its accuracy. Would you like me to do that? What would be the best way to get this to you?**

---

**In reviewing the results over the next several months, I might find the need to ask follow-up questions or to clarify some of the topics we discussed today. What would be the best way to contact you to do this?**

---

**When the study is completed, I would like to share the results with you. Are you interested in seeing the results? If so, can you provide me with your email, phone, other contact information so I may do so?**

---

---

**Again, thank you for your time.**

**Present participant with gift certificate.**

## Appendix C: Personal and Academic Self-concept Inventory (PASCI)

# P A S C I

## Student Self-Concept Inventory

Enter name or ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Circle sex: F M

Circle school grade: 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 Fr So Jr Sr Grad

### Instructions

Please answer each item below by checking (✓) the most appropriate blank in the series. Consider this example:

Do you often have trouble saying "no" to a sales person?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

If you never or almost never have trouble saying "no" to a sales person you should check the last blank on the left, on the "practically never" side. If you always or very often have difficulty when faced with this kind of experience, you should check the farthest blank on the right. If you fall in between these two extremes, check the blank which you believe most applies to yourself that is in between the two end points.

Take a reasonable amount of time to complete this form accurately, but do not spend too much time reflecting. Remember that your initial reaction is often the most valid.

1. Do you often think of yourself as an outstanding student?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

2. How much do you worry about whether other people will regard you as a success or a failure in your job or in school?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

3. How often are you troubled with shyness?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

4. Do you ever think that you have more ability in mathematics than most of your classmates?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

5. Do you often wish or fantasize that you were better looking?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

6. Do you ever think of yourself as more athletic than most people?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

7. Do you ever feel less capable academically than others at your grade level?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

8. Do you think of yourself as a worthwhile person?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

9. Do you often think that you are quite physically attractive?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

10. Have you ever thought that you had a greater ability to read and absorb articles and textbooks than most people?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

11. How often do you have difficulty expressing your ideas in writing for class assignments?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

12. When you think that some people you meet might have an unfavorable opinion of you, how concerned or worried do you feel about it?

not at all worried \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very worried

13. Most of the time, do you genuinely like yourself?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

14. Do you ever doubt that you are a worthy person?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

15. Do you often think of yourself as good at mathematical problems?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

16. Do you think of yourself as a generally competent person who can do most things well?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

17. Compared with others, how confident do you feel in your mathematical abilities?

not at all confident \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very confident

18. Have you ever thought that you lacked the ability to do well at recreational activities involving coordination and physical agility?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

19. Do you think of yourself as someone who can do quite well on exams and assignments in most of your classes?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

20. How often do you feel concerned about what other people think of you?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

21. Have you ever felt inferior to most other people in athletic ability?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

22. How confident are you that others see you as physically appealing?

not very confident \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very confident

23. Do you usually feel comfortable and at ease meeting new people?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

24. How much do you worry about criticisms that might be made of you by others?

not very much at all \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very much

25. Do you ever feel that you are less physically attractive than you would prefer to be?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

26. Do you feel comfortable and at ease when entering a conversation at a gathering where people are already talking?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

27. When involved in sports requiring physical coordination, are you usually confident that you will do well?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

28. Are you frequently concerned about your ability to do well in school?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

29. Do you ever feel especially proud of, or pleased with, your looks and appearance?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

30. When trying to do well at a sport, how confident are you that your physical abilities will make it possible for you to do well?

not at all confident \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very confident

31. How much do you worry about how well you get along with other people?

not very much \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very much

32. When in a group of people, do you have trouble thinking of the right things to talk about?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

33. Do you often feel nervous or self-conscious when called upon to speak in front of others?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

34. When you have to read an essay and understand it for a class assignment, how worried or concerned do you feel about it?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

35. When you have to write an essay to convincingly express your ideas, how confident do you feel that you have done a good job?

not at all confident \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very confident

36. How often have you felt that your mathematical ability was far below that of your classmates?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

37. How often do you feel that you have a strong sense of self-respect?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

38. Are you often concerned that your school performance is not up to par?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

39. How confident do you feel about your ability to do well on a standardized achievement test with respect to the verbal comprehension portion?

not at all confident \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very confident

40. How confident do you feel about your ability to do well on a standardized achievement test with respect to the mathematics portion?

not at all confident \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very confident

Note: For the remaining items the term "family" refers to your parents or adult guardians - the family that you grew up with. If family members are far away or not living, try to answer as you would have when you were together.

41. Have you often wished that your family would be more supportive of you?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

42. Do you often think that your family holds you in high regard?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

43. Do you sometimes feel that your family does not respect your individuality?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

44. Do you usually feel that your family sees you as capable and competent?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

45. Do you ever feel that your family does not accept you for yourself?

practically never \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ very often

## Appendix D: Parent Demographic Survey



**ADOPTION RESEARCH STUDY**  
**PARENT DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY**

**Instructions:** Please complete the following questions as completely and honestly as possible. If you are not sure of the answer to a question, or if it does not apply, you may leave it blank.

**GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

---

(1) Your Gender:                      *Female*                      *Male*

(2) Your age: \_\_\_\_\_ (3) If applicable, your spouse/partner's age: \_\_\_\_\_

(4) Your racial background/ethnicity (Optional—Circle One):

*Caucasian*    *Latino*                      *African American*    *Asian*                      *Other (Specify):* \_\_\_\_\_

(5) If applicable, your spouse/partner's racial background/ethnicity (Optional—Circle One):

*Caucasian*    *Latino*                      *African American*    *Asian*                      *Other (Specify):* \_\_\_\_\_

(6) Your marital status when you adopted:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Single—never married</i>  | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Living with partner—unmarried</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Married</i>               | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Divorced</i>                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Married but separated</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Widowed</i>                       |

(7) Your current marital status:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Single—never married</i>  | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Living with partner—unmarried</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Married</i>               | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Divorced</i>                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Married but separated</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Widowed</i>                       |

(8) Your highest level of education

***(Check only one)***

- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree

(9) If applicable, your spouse/partner's  
highest level of education:

***(Check only one)***

- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree

(10) Your occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

(11) If applicable, your spouse/partner's occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

(12) Please identify all the children in your family by completing the following table. List your children in order from oldest to youngest, indicating the child participating in this study with an asterisk (\*) in the first column.

<b>* Study Participant</b>	<b>Child #1:</b>	<b>Current Age:</b>	<b>Gender (circle one):</b>	<b>Status of child in the family (circle one):</b>	<b>Check if currently living at home:</b>
	<b>1</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological   Adopted Stepchild   Other</b>	
	<b>2</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological   Adopted Stepchild   Other</b>	
	<b>3</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological   Adopted Stepchild   Other</b>	
	<b>4</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological   Adopted Stepchild   Other</b>	
	<b>5</b>		<b>Male Female</b>	<b>Biological   Adopted Stepchild   Other</b>	

(13) How did you hear about this study (word of mouth, adoption newsletter, flyer, online announcement, etc)? Please be as specific as possible.

---

---

(14) In addition to your own child(ren), do you have any other family members who are also adopted (in your immediate or extended family)? \_\_\_\_\_ *Yes*      \_\_\_\_\_ *No*

If so, please identify them: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

### SCHOOL INFORMATION

*Answer the following regarding the demographics of the schools your daughter attended:*

(15) How many different elementary schools did your daughter attend? \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete the following table for each elementary school attended:*

(16a) To what extent were each of the racial groups represented in your child's first elementary school?

Racial Group	None or Very Few	Some	Many
Caucasian			
Latino			
African American			
Asian			
Other: _____			

*Repeat the above table for each additional elementary school attended*

(16b) Second elementary school, if applicable:

Racial Group	None or Very Few	Some	Many
Caucasian			
Latino			
African American			
Asian			
Other: _____			

(16c) Third elementary school, if applicable:

Racial Group	None or Very Few	Some	Many
Caucasian			
Latino			
African American			
Asian			
Other: _____			

(17) How many different middle schools did your daughter attend? \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete the following table for each middle school attended:*

(18a) To what extent were each of the racial groups represented in your child's first middle school?

<b>Racial Group</b>	<b>None or Very Few</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>Caucasian</b>			
<b>Latino</b>			
<b>African American</b>			
<b>Asian</b>			
<b>Other:</b> _____			

*Repeat the above table for each additional middle school attended.*

(18b) Second middle school, if applicable:

<b>Racial Group</b>	<b>None or Very Few</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>Caucasian</b>			
<b>Latino</b>			
<b>African American</b>			
<b>Asian</b>			
<b>Other:</b> _____			

(18c) Third middle school, if applicable:

<b>Racial Group</b>	<b>None or Very Few</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>Caucasian</b>			
<b>Latino</b>			
<b>African American</b>			
<b>Asian</b>			
<b>Other:</b> _____			

(19) How many different high schools did your daughter attend? \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete the following table for each high school attended:*

(20a) To what extent were each of the racial groups represented in your child's first high school?

<b>Racial Group</b>	<b>None or Very Few</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>Caucasian</b>			
<b>Latino</b>			
<b>African American</b>			
<b>Asian</b>			
<b>Other:</b> _____			

*Repeat the above table for each additional high school attended.*

(20b) Second high school, if applicable:

<b>Racial Group</b>	<b>None or Very Few</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>Caucasian</b>			
<b>Latino</b>			
<b>African American</b>			
<b>Asian</b>			
<b>Other:</b> _____			

(20c) Third high school, if applicable:

<b>Racial Group</b>	<b>None or Very Few</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Many</b>
<b>Caucasian</b>			
<b>Latino</b>			
<b>African American</b>			
<b>Asian</b>			
<b>Other:</b> _____			

### COMMUNITY INFORMATION

*Answer the following questions regarding the area(s) you lived in while your daughter was growing up:*

(21) How many different neighborhoods did your daughter live in growing up? \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete the following table for each neighborhood:*

(22a) To what extent were each of the racial groups represented in your *first* neighborhood?

Racial Group	None or Very Few	Some	Many
Caucasian			
Latino			
African American			
Asian			
Other: _____			

*Repeat the above table for each additional neighborhood lived in.*

(22b) To what extent were each of the racial groups represented in your *second* neighborhood, if applicable?

Racial Group	None or Very Few	Some	Many
Caucasian			
Latino			
African American			
Asian			
Other: _____			

(22c) To what extent were each of the racial groups represented in your *third* neighborhood, if applicable?

Racial Group	None or Very Few	Some	Many
Caucasian			
Latino			
African American			
Asian			
Other: _____			

***THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!***

## Appendix E: Parent Semi-structured Interview Protocol



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ADOPTION RESEARCH STUDY PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL</b></p>
---

**Instructions to read to the Respondent (R):**

The purpose of this interview is to discuss your and your daughter's experiences as an adoptee growing up: at home with family members, in school and social circles with peers, and in the greater community setting.

We will address these areas separately.

After I read each question to you, take your time to answer the question as completely and honestly as possible. If you need the question repeated, feel free to ask me to do so.

If you are not sure how to answer a question, or do not understand it, ask me to clarify it for you.

If a question makes you uncomfortable and you do not wish to answer it, you may just say, "I would like to pass on this question and return to it later" or simply, "I would like to pass on answering this question".

**Prior to beginning the interview:**

Review the demographic survey the parent has completed, verifying each item for accuracy and clarifying any questions pertaining to their background information, school, and community information.

**FAMILY EXPERIENCES**

---

*Answer the following questions regarding your adopted daughter participating in this study:*

(1) What was your daughter's age at adoption? \_\_\_\_\_

(2) What were her living conditions prior to adoption:

- Orphanage
- Foster Care
- Hospital Care
- Unknown
- Other

(3) Can you tell me why did you decided to adopt?

(4) Did your daughter experience any physical/medical issues pertaining to her adoption?

Yes No

If yes, can you please briefly explain the nature of these issues:

(5) Did your daughter experience any emotional issues pertaining to her adoption?

Yes No

If yes, can you please briefly explain the nature of these issues:

(6) Does your daughter talk openly and honestly about her adoption with you or any other family members?

- Has this changed at all over time as she was growing up?
- Was there a time when she was more, or less, willing to talk about it?

(7a) Did you celebrate any *adoption-related* events as a family?

- If so, can you describe what, how, and how often you celebrated these events?
- Do you believe these celebrations (or lack of them) have had an influence on your daughter's *adoptive* identity development or self-concept?

(7b) Did you celebrate any *Chinese* holidays as a family?

- If so, can you describe what, how, and how often you celebrated these holidays?
- Do you believe these celebrations (or lack of them) have had an influence on your daughter's *racial* identity development or self-concept?

(8) How has your daughter's adoption in to your family influenced your family through the years?

## SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

---

*Answer the following regarding your daughter's school experiences growing up:*

(9) Can you describe in a few sentences your daughter's *academic* experiences:

- in *elementary* school?
- in *middle* school?
- in *high* school?

(10) Has being *adopted* had any influence on your daughter *academically*?

(11) Has your daughter's *ethnic heritage* had any influence on her *academically*?

## COMMUNITY/SOCIAL EXPERIENCES

---

*Answer the following questions regarding your daughter's  
peer and social experiences growing up:*

(12) Can you talk about your daughter's *social and peer* relationships:

- During early childhood/preschool?
- During her school years?
- During and through adolescence?

(13) Has being *adopted* had any influence on your daughter *socially*?

(14) Has your daughter's *ethnic heritage* had any influence on her *socially*?

(15) Has your daughter ever complained of being teased, bullied, or had racial comments made to her growing up?

- If so, could you please describe one or two of these experiences (her age at the time, the events, the outcome, how your daughter handled it, how you handled it)?

(16) What have been some of the *best* things about your daughter's development and growth as a Chinese adoptee?

- Can you give some examples?

(17) What have been some of the *hardest* things about your daughter's development and growth as a Chinese adoptee?

- Can you give some examples?

(18) What would you say are some of your daughter's greatest strengths?

(19) Based upon your and your daughters' experiences, is there anything you would like to say to other adoptees or individuals who have relationships with adoptees?

- **Any tips, advice, knowledge you would like to share with others, such as:**
- **Other adoptees?**
- **Other adoptive parents?**
- **Educators?**
- **Counselors/social workers?**
- **Anyone else?**

(20) Is there anything that this interview has not addressed that you feel is pertinent to your daughter's growth and development as a Chinese adoptee? Or anything you would like to add to our discussion that we have not addressed here?

**This concludes our interview.**

**I would like to thank you so very much for your time and willingness to share about these very personal aspects of you and your daughter's lives with me.**

**I hope the results of what you and the other participants in this study have to say will make a difference for other adoptees, whether Chinese or otherwise.**

**I might also contact you to ask if you would like to review the transcript of this interview to verify its accuracy. Would you like me to do that? What would be the best way to get this to you?**

---

**In reviewing the results over the next several months, I might find the need to ask follow-up questions or to clarify some of the topics we discussed today. What would be the best way to contact you to do this?**

---

**When the study is completed, I would like to share the results with you. Are you interested in seeing the results? If so, can you provide me with your email, phone, other contact information so I may do so?** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Again, thank you for your time.**

**Present participant with gift certificate.**

## Appendix F: Educator Demographic Survey

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ADOPTION RESEARCH STUDY EDUCATOR DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY</b></p>
---

**Instructions:** Please complete the following questions as completely and honestly as possible. If you are not sure of the answer to a question, or it does not apply, you may leave it blank.

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

---

*Please answer the following questions as they pertain to you.*

(1) Gender:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

(2) Racial background/ethnicity  
(Optional—Check *one*):

- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Latino
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Other (Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Age:

- ☐ 21-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60-69
- ☐ 70+

(4) Highest level of education

- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Sixth year degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree

(5) Years of experience in education: \_\_\_\_\_

(6) Current position:

\_\_\_\_\_

(7a) Do you have any knowledge or training specific to the needs of adopted children or children from non-traditional families?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If so, can you describe the type of training (college course, professional development, online seminar, personal reading, etc.), approximate number of hours of training, and a brief description of the type of information gathered from the training.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(7b) Do you, personally, have any family members who are adopted in your immediate or extended family? \_\_\_\_\_ *Yes* \_\_\_\_\_ *No*

If so, please identify them: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



### SCHOOL INFORMATION

*Please answer the following questions as they pertain to the school in which you came to know and develop a relationship with the adoptee participating in this study.*

(8) Grade Level:

- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ High School
- ☐ College

(9) Type of school (Check all that apply):

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private
- ☐ Parochial
- ☐ Magnet/Charter
- ☐ Other (Describe): \_\_\_\_\_

(10) In what capacity do/did you know the adoptee? Expand, if necessary:

- ☐ Advisor \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Coach \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Classroom teacher \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Counselor \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Administrator \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

(11) To what extent were each of the racial groups represented in this school?

Racial Group	None or Very Few	Some	Many
Caucasian			
Latino			
African American			
Asian			
Other: _____			

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!**

## Appendix G: Educator Semi-structured Interview Protocol

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ADOPTION RESEARCH STUDY EDUCATOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL</b></p>
---

**Instructions to read to the Respondent (R):**

The purpose of this interview is to discuss \_\_\_\_\_'s adoption experiences growing up and how being adopted has affected her life in school and social circles with her peers. We will address these areas separately.

After I read each question to you, take your time to answer the question as completely and honestly as possible. If you need the question repeated, feel free to ask me to do so. If you are not sure how to answer a question, or do not understand it, ask me to clarify it for you.

If a question makes you uncomfortable and you do not wish to answer it, you may just say,

“I would like to pass on this question and return to it later” or simply, “I would like to pass on answering this question”.

**Prior to beginning the interview:**

Review the demographic survey the educator has completed, verifying each item for accuracy and clarifying any questions pertaining to their demographic and school information.

---

**ACADEMICS**

---

*Answer the following questions regarding the adoptee's academic experiences:*

(1) Can you describe the adoptee as a student?

(2) How would you describe the adoptee's *academic* self-concept?

(3) Would you say being *adopted* has influenced her *academic* experiences?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

If yes, can you briefly describe how you feel it has influenced her?

(4) Would you say her *ethnic heritage* has influenced her *academic* experiences?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

If yes, can you briefly describe how you feel it has influenced her?

(5) What would you say are her *academic* strengths?

(6) What are some of her *academic* weaknesses?

---

#### PEER/SOCIAL EXPERIENCES

---

*Answer the following questions regarding the adoptee's social relationships:*

(7) Can you describe the adoptee's peer relationships?

- Who are some of her friends?
- What were they like?

(8) How would you describe her *social* self-concept in relation to her peers?

(9) Would you say being *adopted* has influenced her *social* relationships?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

If yes, can you briefly describe how you feel it has influenced her relationships?

(10) Would you say her *ethnic heritage* has influenced the adoptee's *social* relationships?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

If yes, can you briefly describe how you feel her ethnic heritage has influenced her?

(11) What would you say are the adoptee's *personal* strengths?

(12) What are some of her *personal* weaknesses?

(13) To your knowledge, has she ever complained of (or have you ever observed her) being teased, bullied, or had racial comments made to her?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

If so, could you please describe these experiences (her age at the time, a description of the events, the outcome, how she handled it, how it was dealt with by others)?

(14) Have you ever observed her participate in any extracurricular or community related activity?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If so, can you comment on her performance as you observed it?

(15) What advice, if any, would you give to any of the following who have relationships/dealings with adoptees based upon your observations and experience?

- **Other adoptees?**
- **Adoptive parents?**
- **Teachers?**
- **Counselors/social workers?**
- **Anyone else?**

(16) Is there anything that this interview has not addressed that you feel is pertinent to share pertaining to this young lady or others adoptees you have known?

**This concludes the interview.**

**I would like to thank you so very much for your time and effort in contributing to this research.**

**I hope the results of what you and the other participants in this study have to say will make a difference for other adoptees, whether Chinese or otherwise.**

**I might also contact you to ask if you would like to review the transcript of this interview to verify its accuracy. Would you like me to do that? What would be the best way to get this to you?**

---

**In reviewing the results over the next several months, I might find the need to ask follow-up questions or to clarify some of the topics we discussed today. What would be the best way to contact you to do this?**

---

**When the study is completed, I would like to share the results with you. Are you interested in seeing the results? If so, please provide me with your email, phone, other contact information so I may do so? \_\_\_\_\_**

---

**Again, thank you!**

**Present participant with gift certificate.**

## Appendix H: Adoptee/Parent Letter and Assent/Consent Forms (Under 18)



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

Date

Dear <Prospective Family Name>:

My name is Margie Aldrich, and I am an adoptive parent, a certified school counselor, and a student in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, Connecticut. The topic of my dissertation research is to examine the family, school, social, and community experiences of Chinese adoptees between the ages of 16 and 21.

In order to conduct my research, I am looking for volunteers to participate in an individual session during which you will complete a brief demographic survey, a self-concept assessment, and an individual interview regarding your experiences as Chinese adoptee. The interview should take approximately two hours and will be audio recorded. In addition, at least one parent and one educator whom you recommend will be asked to complete demographic surveys and participate in separate interviews. Each participant will be presented with a 25 dollar gift certificate as a token of appreciation for their time.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable information regarding the personal experience of growing up as a Chinese adoptee. Participation in this study is completely voluntary for all parties involved. Participation or non-participation in this research will have no adverse affect on you in any way. If you do agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Any personal identifying information will not be reported to maintain the confidentiality of the individual respondents. **Due to the personal nature of the topic under study, there is the minimal risk of emotional discomfort or anxiety. In the event you should require follow-up services or support, you may contact Marilyn Kain, MS, LPC, LADC at xxx-xxx-xxxx.**

Again, any information obtained through this study will remain completely confidential. If you would like to discuss the study with me or have any questions about it, feel free to contact me via email or phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx. Thank you for your interest in this important research.

Sincerely yours,

Margie S. Aldrich, MS, NCC

Deborah Hardy, EdD, Faculty Advisor





Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Participant Assent Form for Research Study**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to voluntarily participate in the  
(printed name of participant)  
research study, “Daughters of China: An Examination of the Home, School, and Community Experiences of Adolescent and Young Adult Chinese-American Adoptees”. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential and any personal identifying information will not be reported. I acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose this research study, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my participation.

As a minor under the age of 18, I understand that my participation in this study also requires the consent of my parent or guardian. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I understand this study involves completion of a demographic survey; an individual interview with me, which will be audio recorded; and a self-concept survey. I further understand that as part of the study, I agree to allow the parent(s) and one educator named below to participate in separate interviews regarding my experiences.

Therefore, I give my assent for the researcher to contact my parent(s),

\_\_\_\_\_  
parent or parent(s)’ full name(s)

at \_\_\_\_\_; and the following named educator, \_\_\_\_\_,  
(parent’s phone contact) (educator’s full name)

at \_\_\_\_\_,  
(educator’s phone contact) (educator’s home or email address)

to arrange for interviews regarding my home, school, social, and community experiences.

**I also understand that there is a minimal risk of possible discomfort or anxiety due to the personal nature of the topic under study, and that I may contact Marilyn Kain, MS, LPC, LADC at xxx-xxx-xxxx in the event I should desire any follow-up services or support during or after the study. I realize I am free to withdraw from the study at any point in time should I choose.**

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Parental Consent Form for Minor Child's Participation in Research Study**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the parent/legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_  
(printed name of parent or guardian) (printed name of minor child)

acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose this research study, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my child's participation. I voluntarily consent to my child's participation. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential and any personal identifying information will not be reported. I give my permission for the named parent and educator (listed by my child on the **Participant Assent Form**) to be contacted by the researcher and to participate in separate interviews regarding my daughter's experiences.

**I further understand that there is a minimal risk of possible discomfort or anxiety due to the personal nature of the topic under study, and that Marilyn Kain, MS, LPC, LADC may be contacted at xxx-xxx-xxxx in the event I or my child should desire any follow-up services or support. I understand my daughter is free to withdraw from the study at any point in time should she choose to do so.**

Signature of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I: Parent Letter & Consent Form (Under 18)



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

Date

Dear <Parent/Guardian's Name(s)>:

My name is Margie Aldrich, and I am an adoptive parent, a certified school counselor, and a student in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, Connecticut. The topic of my dissertation research is to examine the family, school, social, and community experiences of Chinese adoptees between the ages of 16 and 21.

Your child <Adoptees' Name Here> has volunteered to participate in this study. She has given her assent for you, as her parent, to participate in a personal interview regarding her home, school, social, and community experiences growing up as a Chinese adoptee. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded. You will also be asked to complete a demographic survey prior to the interview. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. Participation or non-participation in this research will have no adverse affect on you or your daughter in any way. If you do agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable information regarding the personal experience of growing up as a Chinese adoptee. **Due to the personal nature of the topic under study, there is the minimal risk of emotional discomfort or anxiety. In the event you should require follow-up services or support, you may contact Marilyn Kain, MS, LPC, LADC at xxx-xxx-xxxx.**

Any information obtained through this study will remain completely confidential. If you would like to discuss the study with me or have any questions about it, feel free to contact me via email or phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx. If you agree to participate in this study, **please sign the attached statement and return it to me as soon as possible, or at the interview.** Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Margie S. Aldrich, MS, NCC

Deborah Hardy, EdD, Faculty Advisor



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Consent Form for Research Study—Parent Participant**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to voluntarily participate in the research  
(printed name of parent participant)

study, “Daughters of China: An Examination of the Home, School, and Community Experiences of Adolescent and Young Adult Chinese-American Adoptees”. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose this research study, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my participation.

I understand my daughter has granted her written assent for me to participate in this study, which involves completing a demographic survey and an individual interview, which will be audio recorded, regarding her home, school, social, and community experiences growing up as a Chinese adoptee.

**I understand that there is a minimal risk of possible discomfort or anxiety due to the personal nature of the topic under study, and that I may contact Marilyn Kain, MS, LPC, LADC at xxx-xxx-xxxx in the event I should desire any follow-up services or support during or after the study. I further understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any point in time should I choose to do so.**

Signature of Parent Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix J: Educator Letter & Consent Form (Under 18)



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

Date

Dear *<Educator's Name Here>*:

As you know, my name is Margie Aldrich. I am an adoptive parent, a certified school counselor, and a student in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, Connecticut. The topic of my dissertation research is to examine the family, school, social, and community experiences of Chinese adoptees between the ages of 16 and 21.

*<Adoptees' Name Here>* has volunteered to participate in this study. She and her parent have given their consent for you, as a past or present educator with whom she knows from a school setting, to participate in a personal interview regarding her academic and social experiences growing up as a Chinese adoptee. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour and will be audio recorded. You will also be asked to complete a brief demographic survey prior to the interview. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. Participation or non-participation in this research will have no adverse affect on you or *<Adoptees' Name Here>* in any way. If you do agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant will be presented with a 25 dollar gift certificate as a token of appreciation for their time.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable information regarding the personal experience of growing up as a Chinese adoptee.

Any information obtained through this study will remain completely confidential. If you would like to discuss the study with me or have any questions about it, feel free to contact me via email or phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Margie S. Aldrich, MS, NCC

Deborah Hardy, EdD, Faculty Advisor



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Consent Form for Research Study—Educator Participant**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to voluntarily participate in the research  
(printed name of participant)

study, “Daughters of China: An Examination of the Home, School, and Community Experiences of Adolescent and Young Adult Chinese-American Adoptees”. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose this research study, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my participation.

I understand that <Adoptees’ Name Here> and her parent, have granted written permission for me to participate in this study. This involves completing a demographic survey, and participating in a personal interview (which will be audio recorded) regarding her school, social, and community experiences growing up as a Chinese adoptee.

I further understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any point in time should I choose to do so.

Signature of Educator Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix K: Adoptee Letter & Consent Form (18 and Over)



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

Date

Dear <Prospective Participant's Name>:

My name is Margie Aldrich, and I am an adoptive parent, a certified school counselor, and a student in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, Connecticut. The topic of my dissertation research is to examine the family, school, social, and community experiences of Chinese adoptees between the ages of 16 and 21.

In order to conduct my research, I am looking for volunteers to participate in an individual session during which you will complete a brief demographic survey, a self-concept assessment, and an individual interview regarding your experiences as Chinese adoptee. The interview should take approximately two hours and will be audio recorded. In addition, at least one parent and one educator whom you recommend will be asked to complete demographic surveys and participate in separate interviews. Each participant will be presented with a 25 dollar gift certificate as a token of appreciation for their time.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable information regarding the personal experience of growing up as a Chinese adoptee. Participation in this study is completely voluntary for all parties involved. Participation or non-participation in this research will have no adverse affect on you in any way. If you do agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Any personal identifying information will not be reported to maintain the confidentiality of the individual respondents. **Due to the personal nature of the topic under study, there is the minimal risk of emotional discomfort or anxiety. In the event you should require follow-up services or support, you may contact Marilyn Kain, MS, LPC, LADC at xxx-xxx-xxxx.**

Any information obtained through this study will remain completely confidential. If you would like to discuss the study with me or have any questions about it, feel free to contact me via email or phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx. Thank you for your interest in this important research.

Sincerely yours,

Margie S. Aldrich, MS, NCC

Deborah Hardy, EdD, Faculty Advisor



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Participant Consent Form for Research Study**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to voluntarily participate in the research  
(printed name of participant)  
study, “Daughters of China: An Examination of the Home, School, and Community  
Experiences of Adolescent and Young Adult Chinese-American Adoptees”. I understand all  
information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I acknowledge that  
the researcher has explained to me the purpose of this research study, identified any risks  
involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my  
participation.

I understand this study involves completion of a demographic survey; an individual interview  
with me (which will be audio recorded), and a self-concept survey. I further understand that  
as part of the study, I agree to allow the parent(s) and one educator named below to  
participate in separate interviews regarding my experiences.

Therefore, I give my permission for the researcher to contact my parent(s),

\_\_\_\_\_,  
parent or parent(s)’ full name(s)

at \_\_\_\_\_; and the following educator, \_\_\_\_\_,  
(parent’s phone contact) (educator’s full name)

at \_\_\_\_\_,  
(educator’s phone contact) (educator’s home or email address)

to arrange for interviews regarding my home, school, social, and community experiences.

**I understand that there is a minimal risk of possible discomfort or anxiety due to the  
personal nature of the topic under study, and that I may contact Marilyn Kain, MS,  
LPC, LADC at xxx-xxx-xxxx in the event I should desire any follow-up services or support  
during or after the study. I further understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any  
point in time should I choose to do so.**

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix L: Parent Letter & Consent Form (18 and Over)



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

Date

Dear <Parent/Guardian's Name(s)>:

My name is Margie Aldrich, and I am an adoptive parent, a certified school counselor, and a student in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, Connecticut. The topic of my dissertation research is to examine the family, school, social, and community experiences of Chinese adoptees between the ages of 16 and 21.

Your child <Adoptees' Name Here> has volunteered to participate in this study. She has given her consent for you, as her parent, to participate in a personal interview regarding her home, school, social, and community experiences growing up as a Chinese adoptee. The interview will take approximately 90 minutes to one hour and will be audio recorded. You will also be asked to complete a demographic survey prior to the interview. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential, and any personal identifying information will not be reported to maintain the confidentiality of the individual respondents.

Participation or non-participation in this research will have no adverse affect on you or your daughter in any way. If you do agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant will be presented with a 25 dollar gift certificate as a token of appreciation for their time.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable information regarding the personal experience of growing up as a Chinese adoptee. **Due to the personal nature of the topic under study, there is the minimal risk of emotional discomfort or anxiety. In the event you should require follow-up services or support, you may contact Marilyn Kain, MS, LPC, LADC at xxx-xxx-xxxx.**

Again, any information obtained through this study will remain completely confidential. If you would like to discuss the study with me or have any questions about it, feel free to contact me via email or phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx. Thank you for your interest in this important research.

Sincerely yours,

Margie S. Aldrich, MS, NCC

Deborah Hardy, EdD, Faculty Advisor



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Consent Form for Research Study—Parent Participant**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to voluntarily participate in the research  
(printed name of parent participant)

study, “Daughters of China: An Examination of the Home, School, and Community Experiences of Adolescent and Young Adult Chinese-American Adoptees”. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose this research study, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my participation.

I understand my daughter has granted her written permission for me to participate in this study, which involves completing a demographic survey and an individual interview (which will be recorded) regarding her home, school, social, and community experiences growing up as a Chinese adoptee.

**I understand that there is a minimal risk of possible discomfort or anxiety due to the personal nature of the topic under study, and that I may contact Marilyn Kain, MS, LPC, LADC at xxx-xxx-xxxx in the event I should desire any follow-up services or support during or after the study. I further understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any point in time should I choose to do so.**

Signature of Parent Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix M: Educator Letter & Consent Form (18 and Over)



Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

Date

Dear <Educator's Name Here>:

My name is Margie Aldrich, and I am an adoptive parent, a certified school counselor, and a student in the doctoral program for Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, Connecticut. The topic of my dissertation research is to examine the family, school, social, and community experiences of Chinese adoptees between the ages of 16 and 21.

<Adoptees' Name Here> has volunteered to participate in this study. She has given her consent for you, as a past or present educator with whom she knows from a school setting, to participate in a personal interview regarding her academic and social experiences growing up as a Chinese adoptee. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour and will be audio recorded. You will also be asked to complete a brief demographic survey prior to the interview. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential.

Participation or non-participation in this research will have no adverse affect on you or <Adoptees' Name Here> in any way. If you do agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant will be presented with a 25 dollar gift certificate as a token of appreciation for their time.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable information regarding the personal experience of growing up as a Chinese adoptee.

Any information obtained through this study will remain completely confidential. If you would like to discuss the study with me or have any questions about it, feel free to contact me via email or phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Margie S. Aldrich, MS, NCC

Deborah Hardy, EdD, Faculty Advisor





Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership  
Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Consent Form for Research Study—Educator Participant**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to voluntarily participate in the research  
(printed name of participant)

study, “Daughters of China: An Examination of the Home, School, and Community Experiences of Adolescent and Young Adult Chinese-American Adoptees”. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose this research study, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my participation.

I understand that <Adoptees’ Name Here> has granted her written permission for me to participate in this study. This involves completing a demographic survey, and participating in a personal interview (which will be audio recorded) regarding her school, social, and community experiences growing up as a Chinese adoptee.

I further understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any point in time should I choose to do so.

Signature of Educator Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix N: Sample Recruitment Email

## Doctoral Study On Chinese Adoptees—Call For Participants

Hello

I obtained your email address from ENTERDETAILS. I thank you in advance for taking a few minutes out of your busy schedule to read this request.

My name is Margie Aldrich, and I am an adoptive parent, certified school counselor, and Ed.D. candidate in Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, Connecticut.

I am in the process of conducting an exciting research study which will explore the personal perspectives of adolescent and young adult Chinese adoptees (ages 16 to 21) regarding their home, school, social, and community experiences. The goal of this study is to give voice to this older group of adoptees who are now starting to “come of age.” It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable information regarding the personal experience of growing up as a Chinese adoptee in the United States.

The purpose of this email request is to ask your assistance with distributing the attached flyer to individuals who may be interested in participating in the study.

Would it be possible to post an announcement and the flyer on your website and/or distribute it in a newsletter (if you have one going out in the near future)? Or, perhaps you might know of any other individuals I may contact to get the word out. Feel free to forward this information to anyone else, as well. My hope is to obtain participants and conduct interviews over the next few months. Since summer vacations are beginning, it would be the ideal time to conduct these interviews, so time is of the essence.

If you are willing and able to assist me, please let me know by responding to this email. I am incredibly grateful for any assistance you can provide. As you are probably aware, the key to achieving anything in this field is networking with others who are committed to adoption. I hope you can help.

With many thanks,

**Margie Aldrich, MS, NCC**  
**Ed.D. Candidate, Instructional Leadership**  
**Western Ct. State University**

*This research study has been reviewed and approved by Western Connecticut State University's Institutional Review Board. Any information obtained through this study will remain confidential and the identity of participants will not be revealed.*

## Appendix O: Recruitment Flyer

# Are you or is someone you know a Chinese adoptee between the ages of 16 and 21?

If so, you may be interested in participating in an exciting research study which will explore the personal perspectives of adolescent and young adult Chinese adoptees regarding their home, school, social, and community experiences.



We are looking for volunteers to participate in an individual session during which they will complete a brief demographic survey, a self-concept assessment, and an individual interview regarding their experiences growing up as Chinese adoptee.

In addition, one parent and one educator will complete demographic surveys and participate in separate interviews.

If interested, contact Margie Aldrich at  
xxx-xxx-xxxx for more information.

**All information obtained through this research will remain completely confidential,  
and participation is voluntary.**



*This research has been approved by The Institutional Review Board of Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, CT.*

## Appendix P: Abstract of Study for Recruitment

DAUGHTERS OF CHINA: AN EXAMINATION OF THE HOME, SCHOOL, AND  
COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENT AND  
YOUNG ADULT CHINESE-AMERICAN ADOPTEES

Marguerite Scaglione Aldrich, BBA, MS, NCC

Western Connecticut State University

Abstract

Over the last 30 years adoption researchers have provided worthy insight into the development of adoptive identity and self-concept of inter-country adoptees. There has been very little research, however, on Chinese adoptees. The studies that have been conducted with this population have predominantly relied upon the parents' perspectives; simply because most of the children have not been old enough to speak for themselves. A child adopted at 12 months of age in 1995, when the number of Chinese adoptions began to increase, would presently be approaching or already in young adulthood. As a result, the voices of these young women are missing from current research.

The proposed qualitative study will explore the development of identity, the experiences of academic life, and perspectives regarding the quality of family, peer, social, and community relationships of Chinese adoptees in the United States. The intent of this study is to give this oldest group of adoptees a voice which will harvest personal perceptions that have not been previously available. The perspective of the adolescents and young adults who are going through this phenomenon can help to describe and illuminate the essence of their experiences.

Using a multiple case study design, data will be gathered from a sample of approximately 10 female Chinese adoptees, ranging in age from 16 to 21 years, at least one of their parents, and an educator who knows them. Each adoptee will complete a demographic survey, semi-structured interview, a self-concept survey, and where necessary, follow-up interviews. The adoptees will be asked to describe their experiences retrospectively. Parents and educators will complete demographic surveys, participate in semi-structured interviews, and where necessary, follow-up interviews. Whenever possible, face-to-face interviews will be conducted with all participants, depending upon geographic location. Otherwise, interviews will be conducted by telephone or using Internet-assisted technology.

Interview transcripts will be coded using an appropriate schema which will allow themes to emerge. Responses from all participants will be compared across and within cases. Results from the self-concept scale will be used as additional data to support and verify the qualitative data obtained from the interviews and questionnaires.



## Appendix Q: Final Code List

*Final Code List*

Main Code Name	Subcode Name	Number of Sources <sup>a</sup>	Number of Times Code was Used	Related Themes <sup>b</sup>
Activities	Adoption Related	17	30	1,2,9
	Other	30	81	4
Adoption	Humor	9	13	6,7
	Kinship	23	109	7
	Openness	3	3	--
	Personal Story	12	25	1
	Questions	8	14	2,7,9
	Talking about Adoption	25	60	6
	Unknown Things	15	37	6
Beauty		7	7	--
Bonding		8	10	2
Community Acceptance		15	19	7
Cultural Diversity	China	15	45	7,8,9
	Chinese Culture	27	79	9
	Chinese Language	18	33	8,9
	Chinese pride	8	13	9
	Diversity	29	59	7,8
	Insensitivity of Others	19	71	7
	Other Asians	14	37	7
	Other Languages	10	16	8
	Travel	15	27	7,8
Disappointments		10	18	6
Emotional	Fears	11	20	6
	Feelings	9	15	6
	Insecurity	5	9	--
	Trust	6	10	--
Fortunate		15	37	1
Future Plans	Career	16	40	9
	Family	9	24	9

<sup>a</sup>The total number of sources was 33 (11 adoptees, 11 parents, 11 educators).

<sup>b</sup>Codes with fewer than 8 sources and 10 uses were not associated with any themes.

*Final Code List (Continued)*

Main Code Name	Subcode Name	Number of Sources <sup>a</sup>	Number of Times Code was Used	Related Themes <sup>b</sup>
Giving Back to Others		9	16	1
Health	Emotional	15	30	6
	Physical	18	38	6
Identity	Academic	21	56	4,5
	Adoptive	18	47	1
	Change over time	21	39	9
	Cultural	25	46	7,8,9
	Family	17	30	2
	Racial	27	56	5,7,8
	Social	26	72	3
Parents	Desires for your Child	3	8	--
	Empty Nest	2	4	--
	Parental Pride	5	8	--
Personality Traits	Compassionate	1	3	--
	Confident	4	4	--
	Impulsive	3	5	--
	Introverted	3	8	--
	Leadership	3	6	--
	Mature	14	24	3,4,6
	Naive	1	1	--
	Open-Minded	4	7	--
	Organized	3	5	--
	Outgoing	13	19	3
	Positive Attitude	8	10	1,6
	Responsible	2	2	--
	Reticent or Reserved	6	8	--
	Shy	4	11	--
	Spontaneous	2	3	--
	Strong-Minded	6	16	--
	Welcoming	8	13	3
Physical Appearance		4	7	--

<sup>a</sup>The total number of sources was 33 (11 adoptees, 11 parents, 11 educators).

<sup>b</sup>Codes with fewer than 8 sources and 10 uses were not associated with any themes.

*Final Code List (Concluded)*

Main Code Name	Subcode Name	Number of Sources <sup>a</sup>	Number of Times Code was Used	Related Themes <sup>b</sup>
Relationships	Family	10	18	2
	Extended Family	16	27	2
	Parents	24	51	2
	Siblings	14	36	2
	Acquaintances	8	8	--
	Friends	28	93	7
Religion		17	40	7
Resilience		13	30	6
School	Academics	19	41	4,5
	Adjustment	16	30	4
	Advice to Educators	31	71	1,2,5,7
	Bad Things	11	19	5
	Feelings	11	25	4,5
	Good Things	11	17	5
	Learning Disabilities	4	8	--
	Projects	4	5	--
	Teachers	6	14	--
Sports		24	44	4
Stereotypes		15	26	5
Strengths		23	45	4,5
Strong Work Ethic		27	59	4
Uniqueness		13	19	1
Values or Beliefs	Adoption	24	65	1
	Family	22	45	2
	Race	7	16	--
	Relationships	7	9	--
	School	12	25	4,5

<sup>a</sup>The total number of sources was 33 (11 adoptees, 11 parents, 11 educators).

<sup>b</sup>Codes with fewer than 8 sources and 10 uses were not associated with any themes.